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LaRue McCormick

ACTIVIST IN THE RADICAL MOVEMENT, 1930-1960
THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE
THE COMMUNIST PARTY

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LA RUE MCCORMICK, 1940

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University of California
Berkeley, California

Women in Politics Oral History Project

LaRue McCormick

ACTIVIST IN THE RADICAL MOVEMENT, 1930-1960
THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE
THE COMMUNIST PARTY

With an Introduction by
Dorothy Ray Healey

An Interview Conducted by
Malca Chall
in 1976

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National Endowment for the Humanities

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PREFACE

The following interview is one of a series of tape-recorded memoirs in the California Women Political Leaders Oral History Project. The series has been designed to study the political activities of a representative group of California women who became active in politics during the years between the passage of the woman's suffrage amendment and the current feminist movement--roughly the years between 1920 and 1965. They represent a variety of views: conservative, moderate, liberal, and radical, although most of them worked within the Democratic and Republican parties. They include elected and appointed officials at national, state, and local governmental levels. For many the route to leadership was through the political party--primarily those divisions of the party reserved for women.

Regardless of the ultimate political level attained, these women have all worked in election campaigns on behalf of issues and candidates. They have raised funds, addressed envelopes, rung doorbells, watched polls, staffed offices, given speeches, planned media coverage, and when permitted, helped set policy. While they enjoyed many successes, a few also experienced defeat as candidates for public office.

Their different family and cultural backgrounds, their social attitudes, and their personalities indicate clearly that there is no typical woman political leader; their candid, first-hand observations and their insights about their experiences provide fresh source material for the social and political history of women in the past half century.

In a broader framework their memoirs provide valuable insights into the political process as a whole. The memoirists have thoughtfully discussed details of party organization and the work of the men and women who served the party. They have analysed the process of selecting party leaders and candidates, running campaigns, raising funds, and drafting party platforms, as well as the more subtle aspects of political life such as maintaining harmony and coping with fatigue, frustration, and defeat. Perceived through it all are the pleasures of friendships, struggles, and triumphs in a common cause.

The California Women Political Leaders Oral History Project has been financed by both an outright and a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Matching funds were provided by the Rockefeller Foundation for the Helen Gahagan Douglas component of the project, by the Columbia and Fairtree Foundations, and by individuals who were interested in supporting memoirs of their friends and colleagues. In addition, funds from the California State Legislature-sponsored Knight-Brown Era Governmental History Project made it possible to increase the research and broaden the scope of the interviews in which there was

a meshing of the woman's political career with the topics being studied in the Knight-Brown project. Professors Judith Blake Davis, Albert Lepawsky, and Walton Bean have served as principal investigators during the period July 1975-December 1977 that the project was underway. This series is the second phase of the Women in Politics Oral History Project, the first of which dealt with the experiences of eleven women who had been leaders and rank-and-file workers in the suffrage movement.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons significant in the history of the West and the nation. The Office is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, Director of The Bancroft Library. Interviews were conducted by Amelia R. Fry, Miriam Stein, Gabrielle Morris, Malca Chall, Fern Ingersoll, and Ingrid Scobie.

Malca Chall, Project Director
Women in Politics Oral History Project

Willa Baum, Department Head
Regional Oral History Office

15 November 1979
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Odessa Cox, *Challenging the Status Quo: The Twenty-seven Year Campaign for Southwest Junior College*. 1979, 149 p.

March Fong Eu, *High Achieving Nonconformist in Local and State Government*. 1977, 245 p.

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Elizabeth Rudel Gatov, *Grassroots Party Organizer to Treasurer of the United States*. 1978, 412 p.

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Bernice Hubbard May, *A Native Daughter's Leadership in Public Affairs*. Two volumes, 1976, 540 p.

LaRue McCormick, *Activist in the Radical Movement, 1930-1960: The International Labor Defense and the Communist Party*. 1980, 166 p.

Hulda Hoover McLean, *A Conservative's Crusades for Good Government*. 1977, 174 p.

Julia Porter, *Dedicated Democrat and City Planner, 1941-1975*. 1977, 195 p.

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Eleanor Wagner, *Independent Political Coalitions: Electoral, Legislative, and Community*. 1977, 166 p.

Carolyn Wolfe, *Educating for Citizenship: A Career in Community Affairs and the Democratic Party, 1906-1976*. 1978, 254 p.

Rosalind Wyman, *"It's a Girl:" Three Terms on the Los Angeles City Council, 1953-1965; Three Decades in the Democratic Party, 1948-1979*. 1979, 150 p.

Interviews in Process

Marjorie Benedict, Pauline Davis, Ann Eliaser, Elinor R. Heller, Lucile Hosmer, Emily Pike, Carmen Warschaw, Mildred Younger.

The Helen Gahagan Douglas Component of the California Women Political Leaders
Oral History Project

In four volumes, in process

Volume I: *The Political Campaigns*

Discussion primarily of the 1950 Senate campaign and defeat, in interviews with Tilford E. Dudley, India T. Edwards, Leo Goodman, Kenneth R. Harding, Judge Byron F. Lindsley, Helen Lustig, William Malone, Alvin P. Meyers, and Frank Rogers.

Volume II: *The Congress Years, 1944-1950*

Discussion of organization and staffing; legislation on migrant labor, land, power and water, civilian control of atomic energy, foreign policy, the United Nations, social welfare, and economics, in interviews with Juanita E. Barbee, Rachel S. Bell, Albert S. Cahn, Margery Cahn, Evelyn Chavoor, Lucy Kramer Cohen, Arthur Goldschmidt, Elizabeth Wickenden Goldschmidt, Chester E. Holifield, Charles Hogan, Mary Keyserling, and Philip J. Noel-Baker.

Volume III: *Family, Friends, and the Theater: The Years Before and After Politics*

Discussion of Helen and Melvyn Douglas and their activities at home with their family and among friends, and their work in the theater and movies, in interviews with Fay Bennett, Walter Gahagan, Cornelia C. Palms, Walter R. Pick, and Alis DeSola.

Volume IV: *Congresswoman, Actress, and Opera Singer*

Helen Gahagan Douglas discusses her background and childhood; Barnard College education; Broadway, theater and opera years; early political organization and Democratic party work; the congressional campaigns, supporters; home and office in Washington; issues during the Congress years, 1944-50; the 1950 Senate campaign against Richard M. Nixon, and aftermath; women and independence; occupations since 1950; speaking engagements, travel to Russia, South America, Liberia inauguration, civic activities, life in Vermont.

INTRODUCTION by Dorothy Ray Healey

LaRue McCormick was always described as a "tribune of the people." If there was a problem of red tape that held up benefits, threats of deportation, police abuse, civil rights ignored, civil liberties betrayed, LaRue was always available to cut through bureaucracy, initiate citizens committees, organize protests.

I always marveled at how she maintained an immunity to cant or dogma. I suppose the answer lies in the fact that the needs of people came first, not a reliance on political scripture. Therefore she was one of the very few who insisted on befriending Anna Louise Strong when Stalin deported her from the Soviet Union in 1949 and attacked her as an enemy agent, and Strong's life-time associates shunned her. It was the same response that impelled LaRue to initiate the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee when young Mexicans were being railroaded into prison during World War II.

I first met LaRue in the mid-'30s when she was the head of the International Labor Defense. We shared a flea-bag hotel room during the cotton strike in Kern County in the late '30s. Then, and in the subsequent decades, I remained fascinated by her talent as a public speaker, her insatiable intellectual curiosity, and her refusal to allow "tradition's chains to bind her."

Dorothy Ray Healey,
Former Vice-President,
United Canning Agricultural
Packing and Allied Workers
of America, CIO

March, 1980
Los Angeles, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

LaRue McCormick joined the Communist party in Los Angeles in 1934 when she decided that the Democratic party could not solve the economic conditions besetting so many of the people in her neighborhood and those whom she read about in the newspapers every day. Then, for more than a decade she worked as executive director of the International Labor Defense in Los Angeles on behalf of the rights of agricultural workers to organize and join labor unions, of aliens, and of minorities. Many of the groups and causes she championed are today protected by laws and by organizations now in the mainstream of American political and civic life, although all of the problems have by no means been solved. LaRue McCormick also ran several times for public office as a Communist, not with any expectation of winning, but only to state the issues which she maintained other candidates ignored.

In this oral history, she tells not only the family, educational, social, and civic background of a left-wing woman political leader, but what it meant to her, her family, and her community, that she functioned openly as a Communist; and what it meant to her, after considerable soul searching, to leave the party after 1956.

Our first and only interview session was held on May 6, 1976 during one of my interviewing trips to Los Angeles. Mrs. McCormick suggested that we conduct the interview in my motel room because she intended to be in that area on business of her own. After we had spent nearly four hours recording her interesting story, it became apparent to me that Mrs. McCormick had much more to tell, and that, because she was articulate and knew how to use a tape recorder, she could record on her own additional information which would develop a fuller memoir than could be achieved in a few hours.

With Mrs. McCormick's permission, I asked Lucy Kendall to help me prepare written questions which would elicit the additional background. Ms. Kendall, under the sponsorship of the California Historical Society, was interviewing women who had been active as labor union organizers during the 1930s and 1940s, some of whom had been members of the Communist party. To understand more about the history of the Communist party in the United States, I also read Joseph R. Starobin's account of his experiences, American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957.

The edited transcript of Mrs. McCormick's interview plus the written questions were sent to LaRue McCormick on August 18, 1977 for her correction and self-recorded additions. At about the same time she requested her file from the FBI under the Freedom of Information Act. Much time elapsed, however, before that file (or parts of it) arrived, and then her own poor health and

that of members of her family prevented her from reviewing the transcript, answering the questions, and checking her files for pictures, memoranda, and letters until early 1980. Some copies of these papers have been included in the volume, others will be placed in The Bancroft Library. She has not yet decided where she will deposit the bulk of her papers.

Her long-time friend and colleague Dorothy Healey wrote the introduction which succinctly analyzes LaRue McCormick's pattern of work and thought, a pattern which clearly emerges in this oral history memoir.

Malca Chall
Interviewer-Editor

25 July 1980
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BRIEF BIOGRAPHY -- LaRue McCormick

1909 Born, La Grange, Kentucky

1911 Move to Mojave, California

1913 Move to Los Angeles, California

1915-1927 Hooper Avenue Elementary School; McKinley Junior High School; Thomas Jefferson High School

1930-1934 Active in cooperative movement; International Labor Defense; the Democratic party

1934-1960 Member, Communist party

1937-1950 Executive Director, International Labor Defense, Los Angeles

1938 Candidate for Congress, Sixteenth Congressional District

1942 Candidate for State Senate, Los Angeles County

1943 Candidate for Los Angeles Board of Education

1947 Candidate for Los Angeles Board of Education

1976-1979 Research into Community Education and Health Needs

I FAMILY BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION

[Date of Interview: May 6, 1976]##

Parents and Grandparents in the American Tradition

Chall: Would you tell me a little bit about your own background?

McCormick: I was born on November 1, 1909, in a little town twenty-five miles from Louisville, Kentucky, called La Grange. My paternal grandfather had settled there when he came from England. He came in 1848. After traveling over the country, I think this was the nearest thing that looked like England to him, with the large oak trees; it was a very beautiful place, and he settled there.

Chall: What was your grandfather's name?

McCormick: William Manby. He was my father's father. My maiden name was Manby. My father grew up in that small town.

Chall: What did your grandfather do? Was he a farmer?

McCormick: No, he had a business there in La Grange--several stores. When he first came to that area, I think he intended to do farming, too; but he soon became involved in the beginning of the struggles over the slavery issue that resulted in the Civil War, and became very active in the abolition movement and in the formation of the Republican party.

This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 128.

Chall: Did he come as a young man?

McCormick: Yes, he came as a young man. He was a younger son of an English family, and would not inherit the family money and so forth, and so he set out for this country. Well, 1848 was the time of gold discovery, and he came around the Horn on a sailing ship, and was a little revolted by the coarse, crude frontier. He was quite a cultured man, who I think was quite revolted by what he saw.

Chall: Did he get into the gold fields?

McCormick: He went and looked, and went back down through the southern part of the United States--down into the Texas territory, at that time--and finally (I don't know how) wandered up into the area of Kentucky. I was always told that it looked so much like England that he finally settled there.

Chall: Do you know how old he was?

McCormick: He was twenty.

Chall: I guess he settled in La Grange and married there?

McCormick: Yes, he did. He married a young woman from the area there.

Chall: Did you ever know her name?

McCormick: No, he was married three times. You know, in those days wives wore out quite early from too frequent child-bearing, and he had three wives and twenty-three children! My father was the child of the third marriage, to Miss Elizabeth Belle Clifford.

Chall: That grandmother you knew?

McCormick: Yes. She came from an old American family from up in another part of the state of Kentucky.

But, at any rate, he became quite involved in politics in the community there. As a matter of fact, at home somewhere among my things I have a copy of a leaflet where he was running for the assembly, I believe it was, in the state of Kentucky, right after the Civil War [1868]. The issues and all of the things he put forth are really much the same as they would be if he were running there today. It's not too different--the need to industrialize, the need to correct a lot of the things that had been happening there, and, of course, the problems that the Civil War had left.

Chall: Was he active in the field of abolition?

McCormick: Well, he was. I know some things about him because I looked them up when I was in Louisville. I saw the copies of the Louisville Courier--he had many letters in there as the recording secretary of the Republican club. A couple of them were so interesting that I copied them off. They were quite interesting.

Chall: Had he had any kind of formal education in England?

McCormick: Yes, he evidently had had a very good education. I don't know just what--he came from a family that was fairly well-to-do; they had an iron foundry up in Yorkshire.

Chall: What about Elizabeth Clifford?

McCormick: I don't know anything about her except that they were farm people, and that she was of an old American family. That's all I know.

Chall: How many sisters and brothers did your father have from that marriage?

McCormick: My father had--I think there were four or five--five, probably. I remember going to the family burial plot, and that there were many small children buried; so I think that, in those days, if a mother raised five out of ten she was doing pretty well.

Chall: Now tell me about your mother.

McCormick: My mother came from a family, the McCormicks, who had come to Virginia in very early times and had gone with the frontier progressively west to the Ohio valley--settled in Ohio, and then made their way up into Indiana. The McCormicks were the first white settlers in the city of Indianapolis. The old log cabin is still on the banks of the White River where they settled it. They were frontier people. Some of them had served in the Revolutionary War and were farmers.

Chall: Did they come from England years and years earlier?

McCormick: Or from Ireland, many years earlier.

Chall: They were American settlers from long back, by the time you know of them?

McCormick: Oh, yes. Although my mother had a grandfather who had come from Germany in 1848, following the revolution of 1848. He had become a Quaker. So, I suppose, like all other people, if you look to the grandparents you'll find they came over on one of the later ships. [laughter]

McCormick: My mother and father were married and settled down in La Grange. They were married in 1906, and I was born in 1909. But in 1907 there was a depression--one of our periodic catastrophes--and shortly after my birth my father left and came out to California looking for work, because his business had failed--everything was in a state of chaos there.

I asked him, after I saw Kentucky when I was a young woman, "Why did you ever leave that perfectly beautiful place?" He said, "Well, there was just no future there."

So then my mother followed him when he came out here. He had a job with the Los Angeles Water District, which was being formed at the time because they were putting through the aqueduct to bring water to Los Angeles.

Chall: Could you tell me something about your father--his education?

McCormick: He had gone, as was customary in the South, I think, to a private school. My mother said that at the time of their marriage--she was from Indianapolis--she went down to that part of Kentucky and she was horrified to find a dozen hound dogs sleeping around the fireplace, and guns and old things, including hundreds of muskets that were intended for use in the Civil War that were stored there. She paid someone to take a wagon and fill in a ravine with them. She said the place had just been let go.

Chall: That was your father's house and his guns?

McCormick: Yes. He and his brother--he had a brother that was a year or two older--liked to go hunting and do things of that kind, and they were not in school a good deal of the time. One of the teachers finally notified the family, and the teacher was promptly bounced from the school. So that was what happened.

Chall: So his education was somewhat sporadic, would you say?

McCormick: I think it probably was. I never heard him talk too much about it. I know he mentioned that his sister was sent to a finishing school; that was the custom there. And the boys also went to some kind of a private school.

Chall: Do you remember his birthdate?

McCormick: He was born Jaunary 27, 1885.

Chall: His name?

McCormick: His name was Claude Manby.

Chall: How did your mother happen to come down to...?

McCormick: They met--my father had gone to a picnic or something up in the Indianapolis area and met her. My mother was considered an old maid; I think she was twenty-four years old. So they married and moved to La Grange.

Chall: What was her educational background?

McCormick: I think she had just a public school education for that time.

Chall: So when you were a very small child you moved to Los Angeles.

McCormick: Yes, I was eighteen months old when my mother moved here. She came out to the desert, up in Mojave. My mother often used to tell of her experience on arriving. The train pulled in and there was a gunfight going on between some desperados and the sheriff, and the sheriff came and said, "I'll protect you, lady," and he was so drunk he could hardly stand on his feet. That was rather a wild west town! Mojave was quite a wild west place.

Chall: What did your father do, then, in Mojave?

McCormick: He became an engineer for the water district.

Chall: Were your first growing-up experiences, then, in Mojave?

McCormick: On the desert there, yes.

Chall: How many years did you live there?

McCormick: I think I was four when we moved. Meanwhile my younger sister, Florence, was born there. Then we came to Los Angeles and moved over on what was then supposed to be a very healthy place--the Boyle Heights area--and lived there. My first schooling was there at the little grammar school on East First Street.

Chall: Were there just two children?

McCormick: Yes, there were just the two girls at that time. Then, later, when I was eight, my younger sister, Alice, was born.

Chall: Then there are three girls and no boys.

McCormick: Yes.

Mother's Strong Influence

Chall: What was the religious background of your parents?

McCormick: Well, my grandfather had been a Methodist. And my father--I never really knew of him to go to church, although he and my mother had been raised, I believe, in what they called the Christian church. I know that when I was quite small I was given the choice of either going to Sunday school or doing the dishes, and that caused me to go to Sunday school.

Chall: What an unusual alternative. [laughter]

McCormick: Well, you were supposed to get a Christian education some way, and so it was thought that you could be pressured into going to Sunday school. And so, like many children of that time, we shopped around; we went to one Sunday school or we went to another.

Unfortunately, my mother left Thomas Paine's Appeal to Reason lying around, and at the age of ten I read it. From then on I was what my father used to call a "sacrilegious lout" because I then had all the arguments for not going to Sunday school, or believing in any of it, which caused a lot of difficulties, because I was a pretty loudmouthed, brash kid. In front of their religious friends I would sometimes come out with a strong statement. I remember one day when a religious friend of theirs was present, and someone came to the door and said they were selling the old-time religion. I said, "Well, I don't want the old-time religion any more than I want the old-time washing machine." I caught it for that.

Chall: How did your mother happen to do this? How did your mother happen to have the Appeal to Reason in the first place?

McCormick: My mother read a great deal. As a matter of fact, when I was very small on the desert my mother taught me much about the plants and the names of them. When I came into school, I can recall the teachers being very impressed because I knew the names of all the weeds, and what they were good for, and how you used them, and so forth. Because my mother read a great deal.

Chall: She picked this up from reading?

McCormick: Yes. I never remember the time that my mother didn't have a stack of library books, in addition to books that were in the house generally. The two that impressed me most were Tom Paine's

McCormick: Appeal to Reason and another one that was on the steeples and spires of Europe; I remember it was the pictures of the architecture of Europe, and those things really interested me a great deal.

Chall: It sounds as if your mother was quite an intellectual influence in the family.

McCormick: Yes, she was.

Chall: Was she actively helping her children become intellectually aware of the world, or did she just do this by example--by leaving the books around where they could be seen?

McCormick: No, I think she was interested in almost everything. She was interested in health foods, for example. She was very careful about nutrition and always kept a garden, and food had to be fresh. My father liked sweets and things of that kind. My mother desperately tried to keep us from having what she called the "refined trash foods"--that's what they call it today.

But, you know, as children we wanted the things that all the other kids had, of course. So that was a problem. But she was, I think, ahead of her time in many ways.

Chall: Did you ever hear her talk about the desire that you all have a good education?.

McCormick: Oh, yes, of course. She was very much interested in education.

Chall: Was she interested in women and the women's movement, in suffrage?

McCormick: I never knew of her to particularly participate in that. I don't know. I do know that later, when I was fairly young--maybe twelve, or something like that--she would occasionally take me with her to the Open Forum in Los Angeles. That was the one place where people of all opinions could get together and discuss. There were anarchists and people of various political opinions who got together there. I remember that she had a petition for the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

She had a very keen sense of justice, and was very outspoken about things.

Chall: Did she move in company with other women in social groups?

McCormick: No, I never knew her to do that. She was quite active at our local playground and things of that kind--mothers' groups, and school groups, and things of that kind--but that's all. As I say, the only political thing I ever knew was the Sacco-Vanzetti petition.

Chall: How did she get along with your father in terms of their social outlook?

McCormick: My father shared, I think, much the same ideas. My father was a very outgoing, genial person who was just full of fun. He loved life and he was a great story-teller. We kids just adored him.

But my mother was of sterner stuff. My mother was the disciplinarian in the family. My father often used to say, "My children will do anything I can get them to do." But my mother could get you to do it, in a hurry. That's the way it was.

Chall: As far as you knew, were they registered Republicans or Democrats during the years you were with them?

McCormick: At that time I'm sure they were both Republicans, because my grandfather had had this Republican club, and that was their background.

Chall: What did your father do, then, when you moved to Los Angeles?

McCormick: He stayed until he died, or I should say until he retired, with the water district.

Chall: The Los Angeles--what is its name?

McCormick: Oh, the Department of Water and Power, I guess you'd call it.

Chall: You called him an engineer, but he hadn't been trained in any way.

McCormick: Well, he had had various experiences, and I know he studied a great deal, because my mother used to bring home many of the books--he always had a stack of books there. That was the way he finally got into the thing that he was doing.

Chall: Was he always in some form of engineering?

McCormick: Yes, until he retired.

Chall: That's a long employment in one job.

McCormick: Yes.

Chall: Did the family like Los Angeles as opposed to the desert, or were you too young to know the difference?

McCormick: I missed the desert, I think, because I was accustomed to the wide open spaces and so forth. But Los Angeles at that time wasn't very large, you know. It was a small town. So we liked it.

Chall: Where did you and your two sisters go to school?

McCormick: I went to what was at that time McKinley Junior High School, and then to Thomas Jefferson High School.

Chall: And you always lived on Boyle Heights?

McCormick: No, we moved from Boyle Heights to the southeast part of Los Angeles because my father wanted to have a garden, wanted to have things that you couldn't have there in the congested part of the city; so he moved out to the outskirts of town, on the edge of the city limits, where he could have a cow and a garden.

Chall: Where was that kind of an address?

McCormick: It was at Compton and Slauson, generally. That was the very end of the city at that time. I think they had an ordinance at that time that you couldn't shoot squirrels from the back end of a streetcar; that'll give you an idea of where it was.

Chall: So you did have a garden and you did have a cow?

McCormick: Oh, yes.

Chall: Chickens?

McCormick: Yes, everything. Well, as I said, my mother was quite interested in health and nutrition, and so that made it possible to have the kind of things she thought she should have.

Chall: As you were going through school were there any subjects that you liked better than others?

McCormick: Oh, I loved history. And I had great difficulties with math because I'd had some early experiences. When my younger sister was born my mother was quite ill. I was eight years old, and I was sent to live with an aunt for a short time. It seemed to

McCormick: me that it was for years, but it was really only a very short time. It was an entirely different school district, and I did not know the work; I didn't know what they were doing. At that time there wasn't the unified system in the educational field. I was so embarrassed and so out of place, I just didn't understand it. I think it colored my whole attitude towards doing math, as a result.

Chall: When you say you went to live with an aunt, does that mean that somebody, either your mother's or father's family, came out to the Los Angeles area?

McCormick: Yes, my uncle, my father's brother, had come out. He was living in Los Angeles--or they were living in the beach area.

Chall: Did any other members of either side of the family come out to Los Angeles ultimately? Or did they all stay in the East?

McCormick: Most of them stayed in the East--particularly the McCormicks. They stayed in Indianapolis, with the exception of my husband. He was my first cousin; he was my mother's brother's son. And he came out here.

Early Marriage and Family Responsibilities

Chall: So you liked history. By the time you got to high school what were your plans?

McCormick: I was interested, believe it or not, in law. However, I married at sixteen.

Chall: Was it Mr. McCormick you married?

McCormick: Yes, Lester McCormick. He was in the service at that time, in the navy, and he had come to visit my mother, who was his aunt. We married, keeping it secret for a while. When my mother found out, of course, she had a fit. [laughter]

Chall: How old was he?

McCormick: He was twenty.

Chall: First cousins generally didn't marry.

McCormick: No, and girls of sixteen didn't marry, either, so there were two problems.

Chall: And you kept it secret?

McCormick: Yes, for quite a while. My mother finally learned of it through a cousin, I think, who had seen a notice in the paper.

Chall: So the fat was in the fire.

McCormick: Yes.

Chall: Did you finish high school?

McCormick: Yes. However, I had my son--I was married in 1925 and he was born in 1927. I went back and finished high school. Then I had intended to go on in school and work, too. I had a big program laid out for myself, which I was not able to do because it simply wasn't physically possible.

So, I stayed home with my baby, and then had the second one in 1930--my daughter.

Chall: What are the children's names?

McCormick: The boy's name is William, and the girl is Jacqueline.

Chall: Considering what people think about first cousins marrying, were the children all right?

McCormick: Yes, my son has his master's in education, and my daughter's a lovely person. I don't know; I suppose that there might be a great deal to that if there were greater numbers of children or something. I only had two, and you can't very well judge many of these things.

Chall: Were you able to plan your children?

McCormick: I thought I was planning them, but I later learned that what I thought about birth control was nothing at all [laughter], you know. Of course, in those days birth control was illegal. I remember that during the thirties a young woman came to my door. She was from New York, and I was very impressed with her. She was from show business, and, of course, down and no job. So she was selling what she said was this marvelous birth control product, which I bought and used with the utmost confidence. And it apparently worked, although later I learned that it was an absolute nothing. [laughter]

Chall: You managed, then, in 1930 not to have any more children.

McCormick: No, I never had any more.

Chall: By luck or by plan?

McCormick: Well, by plan. I'll tell you, by 1931, anyone who had more than two children was considered some sort of a scandalous person, because times were so hard that it just wasn't possible. If you were doing any thinking at all, you knew that you just couldn't have a large family under the circumstances; and who knew when we were going to get out of the Depression, you know.

Chall: What was your husband doing during these times?

McCormick: He got out of the service and went to work for a lumber company. Then a year or so later he went to work for one of the studios--Warner Brothers studio.

Chall: Doing what?

McCormick: He worked there--I think he was at that time in the transportation department. They were always going out on location and things of that kind--you know, hauling out people and materials and things.

Chall: That was a pretty steady job, then, once he got it?

McCormick: Yes, but it was in the days when the studios weren't organized, and people were what they called "on call." You were a slave to the telephone; if you missed a telephone call, you were simply out of work for the next two weeks. If you dared to miss a call, it was just too bad, because jobs were so scarce and the movie industry was in as bad a condition as everything else was. So it was not an easy way to live.

Chall: Where did you settle down in your first home?

McCormick: My husband and my father built a house for us in the rear of my parents' place, and we rented that from them for the first two or three years. Then we bought a little place not too far south of where my mother lived--a couple of miles.

Chall: Which was then where?

McCormick: We moved to 1408 East 75th Street, near Compton Avenue, and I've been in the same house ever since.

Chall: You have been?

McCormick: Yes.

Chall: In the house you and your husband moved into in the Depression?

McCormick: That's right, in the Depression.

Chall: So at least your husband had some kind of steady income as long as he stayed with the studio? What was his education?

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McCormick: My husband went to Catholic school; his mother had been Catholic, so he went to Catholic school. I think through eighth grade is what they had at that time. Then he went into the service because his mother died and he and his brother and sister were with the grandparents.

Chall: Tell me about your two sisters. How did they fare as the Depression years moved on? Did they marry so early?

McCormick: No, my younger sister [Florence]--the one two and a half years younger than I--married at around twenty, I think, eighteen or twenty, and the other one at about the same age. And they're both still married.

Chall: Do they have careers of any kind?

McCormick: Yes, the sister that's just a little younger than I am and her husband own a manufacturing business and have been pretty successful at that. The other sister's husband was in the navy until he retired, and they're now living up in Washington. My mother is still living, incidentally, too. She's ninety-four years old! She's living with my younger sister up in Whidby Island, up off the coast of Washington.

Chall: Is your mother still interested in the world around her?

McCormick: Not too much. And my sister says that she's beginning to slip a little--that she now doesn't do much of anything; that she takes walks, as much as she can, because she has arthritis. Four years ago she was in the hospital for the first time in her life. She had a burst appendix, but recovered. And then she just had a pace-maker implanted, and that seems to have given her a new lease on life.

Chall: Up until now, when she's considered to be beginning to slip, which is maybe natural...

McCormick: Well, beginning to slip, I would say, compared to what my mother always was. My mother was very energetic--a housekeeper par excellence, which I am not. And she was always very busy with something. I never saw her just sit down. She just wasn't that kind of person.

McCormick: But now my sister says she doesn't really want to go too much. She'll go with them in the car for a short trip or something, but she doesn't really want to get out too much.

My father died at the age of seventy-nine.

Chall: Are you the only member of your family who became active in what are considered progressive, left-wing causes?

McCormick: Yes, yes. And although the family and I many times disagreed on things, we never had any open breaks about it, or any real problems. And many times they supported the same things that I was interested in in their particular way, which was not particularly mine.

II THE MOVE INTO RADICAL POLITICS, 1934

Chall: Did you ever go to work after your children were older?

McCormick: Yes. I worked in the book department of a department store, but it was only a temporary job through the Christmas season. It was interesting work, but the pay was minimum. The department stores were not organized, and long hours and low pay were the rule.

I went to work in the revolutionary movement. When my daughter was about four I became extremely...Well, I had been active in Democratic politics and in the co-op movement, Then I became active in a branch of the International Labor Defense which met in my neighborhood. It was around the time the Scottsboro case was in full swing. So I became very actively engaged in campaigning for the Scottsboro case and other things that were going on at the time. And, of course, here in California there were so many cases at one time--I think we had the greatest number of people in prison in California for labor and left-wing activities of any place in the country.

Chall: The Mooney--

McCormick: Yes, Tom Mooney was in prison.

Chall: Were you active in that?

McCormick: Yes.

Chall: Then let's find out how you even started moving into this sphere of activity. The cooperative movement, for example.

McCormick: Well, it was during the Depression. It was during the Depression that I began to wonder what it was all about; what was happening. I thought at first that I was simply one of those

McCormick: unlucky people that every time you had a few hundred dollars saved, something would happen--a catastrophe in the family: a broken leg or some illness of some kind or something--and it would be gone. I thought that I just must be unlucky. Then I looked around me and I saw that everyone else had this same lack of luck. So there must be something else working.

I began to read.

Chall: What did you begin to read? And how did you get hold of it?

McCormick: Going by a streetcorner one day I saw a small group of people on Compton and Florence--little old ladies--and they were selling a paper called The Western Worker. It was at that time the organ of the Communist party. So I stopped and listened for a moment, but I was in a hurry getting home, so I just bought one of the papers.

When I got home I was indignant when I read that paper, because the language, I thought, was shocking. Not what they had to say; that seemed to make sense, but the language was very rough. And the paper was at least four days old, and I had no idea that there were papers that came out just once a week, you know. So I thought I had been taken on that.

Chall: What do you mean by shocking language?

McCormick: Well, there were articles from longshoremen, for example, and they used the language of the people and of the street of those days. It was just as shocking as some of the young people's language today might be, I suppose. They said, "What the hell did the boss do that for?" Why, to read a thing in the newspaper like that was pretty shocking!

Chall: So that was your first exposure to the left.

McCormick: That was my first exposure. Then one day a woman came to my door. I never shall forget her; her name was Sadie Goldstein. She was from clear over in the Boyle Heights area. The women were working in the community trying to interest people in organizing the unemployed.

Well, I wasn't really unemployed; I was a housewife. But I was really interested in what was going on.

Chall: Organizing them for what?

McCormick: At that time the thing was to work for the Lundeen bill, which was the first bill for social security. [Congressman Earl Lundeen, Minnesota]

Chall: National or state?

McCormick: No, the Lundeen bill was a national bill. The way we did this was to get a group of people and go to a streetcorner. Someone would get up on a box and chair the meeting, and then introduce-- hopefully we would get someone who could speak well. And you would pass out leaflets and inform them of the need for unemployment insurance and for social security.

Chall: This was what you started out doing?

McCormick: That was what I started out doing. I thought these communists were the strangest people I ever saw in my life. I didn't know, of course, at that time that they were all communists. But they said to come to this meeting, and when I got to the meeting they said, "You're speaking."

That was the first time I saw the Red Squad. They were a group of special police who wore plain clothes and were experts at beating and clubbing radicals who dared to exercise their right to speak out or get together to educate the public about social problems and needs. The Red Squad had a Lieutenant Rudy Wellpot and a Captain "Red" Hynes, who was considered the "ace" Red hunter and expert on Marxism. He, Hynes, was a coarse, crude man who always appeared at trials of radicals and sat with the prosecutor to advise him on matters. I used to see "Red" Hynes frequently because he hung around a bookie at a cigar stand on First and Broadway. He had an office across the street in the deserted Klinger Building where he "studied" pamphlets and papers that he simply took from the Radical Book Store on Spring Street. He and his squad went to every picket line and demonstration in Los Angeles and even outside their jurisdiction. They were a brutal, sadistic group of men, despised by all radicals and liberals and the labor movement. They were disbanded as a result of the recall of the corrupt Shaw machine in 1938.

I once served a subpoena on Hynes and he was quite upset about it. He and his squad had raided the ILD office and taken Lillian Goodman's (then ILD secretary) purse. Al Wirin sued and had gotten judgment against Hynes, but he didn't pay, so we took him to court for recovery of damages. The Red Squad frequently raided private homes and altogether was a brutal, unlawful squad of hooligans, and all of Los Angeles rejoiced when they were

McCormick: disbanded. Hynes still sold himself as a "Marxist" specialist and expert on "labor" to any industry that would hire him. I last saw Wellpot in my community where he was trying to organize the Policemen's Union--I thought it quite strange after all his background of union-busting activities.

I said I'd never done such a thing in my life. But they took turns doing this [speaking at meetings], you see, and then they'd go to another streetcorner and speak there. This is the way they got out information to people.

And, of course, it was illegal in those days to put out a leaflet. Los Angeles had an anti-leaflet ordinance, and you went to jail if you put out leaflets or got caught distributing them.

Chall: Is that right?

McCormick: So the trick was to hold your meeting, get out your leaflets, and be gone before anyone was arrested. [laughter]

Chall: My word! You really learned things fast.

McCormick: I learned a lot of things in a big hurry! [laughter] And, of course, being from an old American family, I thought you had your rights and no one was going to take them away from you. And if you wanted to put out a leaflet, you could put out a leaflet; and if you wanted to speak on a streetcorner, you could speak on a streetcorner.

I soon found out that things were contrary.

Chall: Had this anti-leaflet ordinance been established, do you think, just about that time?

McCormick: I don't know. I only know it was in operation, and I think it had probably--well, I shouldn't say even probably, because I don't know how early it was on the books. Of course, it wasn't enforced against religious groups or other people. But it was enforced against labor and against some others, such as radicals. As a matter of fact, the first time I heard about communists at all was when my husband was working, just after my son was born, in the lumber company. He came home early one afternoon. I asked him how it happened he was coming home so early. "Well," he said, "they had all of us go home, and out through the back gate." He said, "They said the communists were coming."

McCormick: I asked what the communists were. He said, "I don't know. I waited around to find out, and all I saw were some young people that came out and were putting out leaflets."

So this was the first thing I heard about the Young Communist activity.

Chall: He didn't bring home a leaflet, though? He had just watched them?

McCormick: No, evidently he had read the leaflet, because I asked him what it was about, and he said, "Oh, it was just telling people that they ought to do something about getting better wages and so forth."

Chall: From the activities with the Lundein bill, then where did you go?

McCormick: At the same time I was getting active in the International Labor Defense, and we were active in working on the Scottsboro case, and on the Mooney case, and the J.B. MacNamara case. Well, there were so many, it would be hard to mention. The anti-lynch law that they were pushing, and all of the kinds of legislation that were really needed in those days in behalf of the struggles of the black people and all of the working people. The Bill of Rights was mainly on paper in many places in the U.S.--and especially for workers everywhere.

You see, at that time, in Los Angeles, there were three sets of standards for the unemployed. If you were black you got a certain amount to live on; and if you were Mexican you got the least of all, because it was presumed that the Mexican people could live on beans and tortillas and they didn't need as much as either the blacks or, of course, the whites. They were at the top; they got the highest. There was a differential between the amounts that were permitted by county relief.

Chall: This was the state--

McCormick: That was the welfare, yes, county welfare.

Chall: You were all aware of that, then.

McCormick: Oh, yes!

Joining the International Labor Defense

Chall: Tell me about the International Labor Defense. What was this organization?

McCormick: It grew out of the Sacco-Vanzetti case. At the time--I don't remember if it was Sacco or Vanzetti who said, "Only a million men can save us." There was a defense committee, but it wasn't big enough; it wasn't broad enough. So the International Labor Defense was formed in 1925 out of some of the groups that had gotten together on the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

It was very strong in New York, of course, and in the eastern area, and then here in Los Angeles, because Los Angeles was the "great white spot" in California where there wasn't a strong trade union movement. So the International Labor Defense sort of filled a place there, you know--took up the struggles of the unemployed, took up the struggles of those people who were in the first line of activities.

Chall: Were they organized in chapters?

McCormick: It was--branches, they called them.

Chall: And your branch was--

McCormick: In my neighborhood.

Chall: Did it have a name?

McCormick: They were named after political prisoners, and changed from time to time. These were not large meetings; they were held in homes, and they were made up of maybe a dozen people in some instances. However, in the Hollywood area they had maybe a hundred or two hundred people; in the Boyle Heights area there was a very large branch.

In those days the eviction of people was going on, you know--where people lost their homes. The ILD would get out information and raise bail for people if they were arrested during the course of those things. They were sort of the Red Cross of the revolutionary movement. [laughter]

Chall: How were you organized in the home? Was there a chairman and officers?

McCormick: Yes, there was a secretary and a treasurer. Interestingly enough, the chairmanship was rotated because it was not only an organization, but it was an educational organization and the idea was to prepare everyone for taking part. So the chairmanship was rotated.

Chall: Rotated every month, or something of that sort?

McCormick: Yes.

Chall: Did you have a special spot in the organization?

McCormick: Well, I held various offices; everyone in there did. At one time or another you were maybe a treasurer, then a secretary, and the chairman along with it.

Chall: Did your husband participate?

McCormick: No, he did not. He was not very interested, and frowned on a great deal of it because he thought it was--well, the revolutionary movement didn't have a very good name, as you know. And to be a socialist or a communist was pretty wild, pretty far out. So he objected to it.

Chall: Did he feel threatened with respect to his own employment?

McCormick: I don't think that was a factor.

Chall: Did it create rifts between you?

McCormick: Yes, yes, it did--namely because I was out and busy and going all the time with these things.

Chall: How did the various branches keep in touch with the central headquarters?

McCormick: There was a central organization made up of the representatives to the district council. It met downtown; they had an office in downtown Los Angeles. They met there every week and discussed the affairs of the organization and planned activities and so forth.

Chall: People from the different branches?

McCormick: Yes, every branch had a representative to the district council.

Chall: Were you a representative at any time?

McCormick: Yes.

Chall: At those meetings you would plan, I suppose, what the branches might do, or how they would carry out policy?

McCormick: Yes, there was an international program; there was a national program; there was a local program. It kept the organization pretty busy because on the international field they were busy supporting the victims--at that time Hitler had just come to power. They were active in supporting the anti-fascist movement internationally. And here nationally, of course, the people in the unemployed movement and in the labor movement, particularly, because what labor movement there was here in Los Angeles, that was beginning to develop, really had no apparatus for their own defense.

They were usually new unions with very little money to use for themselves if there were a strike--and this was particularly true of the agricultural unions. Whenever there was an agricultural strike there were always people jailed and very seldom was the agricultural union, whatever union it was at that moment, able to take care of it. So the ILD did that.

We raised the money for bail, raised the money for the lawyers, and general defense.

Chall: How did you raise money when you were all pretty poor people?

McCormick: We had parties all the time. Our social life was completely taken up with these fund-raising parties. We had a great variety of pamphlets and educational material which we were selling--pamphlets on just about everything in the world; little penny pamphlets, and two-cent pamphlets, and five-cent pamphlets.

Chall: Were those printed at some other level, like the national level, and sent in?

McCormick: Yes, they were printed in New York and then we got them. There was the monthly publication, the Labor Defender, which was a monthly magazine. That contained all the news on the defense front from all over the world and here at home--local.

Chall: Were those sold at meetings and on streetcorners?

McCormick: On streetcorners and door-to-door--very busy with them.

Chall: Did you ever go out door-to-door?

McCormick: I never missed a Sunday. I was as religious about spending my Sundays with literature as I could be.

Chall: What did you do on Sundays?

McCormick: Well, Sunday mornings we would get together and have a roll and a cup of coffee or something, and then go out and go from door to door in the various communities with the Labor Defender and all these other pamphlets. And we had quite an array of them.

Chall: What was the response like?

McCormick: Very good. Very good. I don't know that people acted on much of it, but they certainly received it, as a rule, very well, particularly in the black community and in the working class areas.

Chall: Would some of them look forward to your coming every Sunday?

McCormick: Yes, and many of them would take out a subscription, sometimes, to the magazine. But generally we concentrated on these pamphlets of particular interest to particular people.

Chall: Did you gain recruits that way, the same way Sadie Goldstein recruited you into the movement?

McCormick: Oh, yes, yes, of course, because there were so many people who were suffering there during the Depression, and who felt that this was something that was of interest to them. Yes, certainly we did.

Joining the Cooperative Movement

Chall: Your primary organizational interest was with the ILD. Is that how you became active and supported the cooperatives. Was it through the ILD, or was it separately?

McCormick: No, that was a completely separate thing. I was interested in the co-ops because that movement was growing and there were meetings all over town held by various groups. Some of them were centered in churches; the one that I was in was centered in the Methodist church. The Methodist minister was quite liberal, and the church was used for all kinds of community things. The people in the church were active supporters of the co-op movement.

Chall: Were they active in a co-op, or how did they help the movement?

McCormick: Well, they helped the movement--actually the co-op sprang from their membership, mainly. And there were people who were in the Socialist party in that church. And there was a large socialist group in the community. I went to a couple of their meetings; they really weren't doing anything--I mean, they weren't actively in anything except the co-op.

Chall: Was this a grocery co-op?

McCormick: It was a grocery co-op. For a time I had one that I ran from my house. Some of the same people--it was a sort of a mixture of people, some of them from that co-op and some other people--neighbors, friends, people who knew about it. For instance, we were able to go out in the country and get milk at, like, twenty cents a gallon. Then we could distribute it, you see, for the same price to people who wanted it. That was a daily excursion out to the dairy district.

The same for fruits and vegetables--we'd go right to the little farms. At that time Los Angeles County was still largely agricultural, and you had only a few miles to go to the source of any produce. And these people were also suffering from the Depression; they were very happy to cooperate with anyone.
[laughter]

We didn't even buy much of it because it was simply going to waste; there was no sale for it, and it was simply excess produce. Sometimes we would exchange some labor, and sometimes we didn't even need to do that. It was just that simple.

For instance, where we got the milk, the dairy farmer told us--he was a Dutchman--"You know, I don't understand, in this country, why we do this." He said that in the Netherlands, "We keep a cow until it's very old, but here you must buy new cows every two years so they will produce an abundance of milk, and then the milk is dumped in the sewer."

So we were able to work with these kinds of people very well.

Chall: There were cooperatives where they did exchange labor for food?

McCormick: Yes. I worked in one of those for a very short time. It was a canning cooperative in my neighborhood, where they canned vegetables and fruits. Then there was an exchange of these products. That was one of the producing co-ops. There were all different kinds; it was very flexible. There was something for everyone, if you just wanted to move and get into something. There was something, some place, that you could work.

Chall: And where people could gain the benefit of something which other people--they were exchanging their labor for the other products.

McCormick: Yes.

Chall: If you took milk from the farmer at almost no cost, did you sell it here at a small cost in order to--?

McCormick: No, at the same price--at exactly the same thing. This was just simply one of the things that we did to make things available for both our membership and other people, because we were trying to encourage people to start cooperative things everywhere.

Chall: Generally, you have to pay something to belong to the co-op--you become a shareholder and then share in the profit.

McCormick: Yes, in the one with a grocery store--because we established a grocery store--we took a ten-dollar membership. When it dissolved, in the middle of the war period--World War II--we returned everybody's initial amount to them.

Chall: That required some bookkeeping, because you got back a certain percentage of the so-called profits at the end of the year. Did you ever have any refunds?

McCormick: I never took mine, because I was very much in favor of getting out more educational material with whatever profits we might have. I thought the general idea of co-ops ought to be to extend the word [laughter], more than having cash money returned.

Chall: I see. These were based on what you would call the Rochdale principles?

McCormick: Yes.

Chall: Did you have people coming out and teaching you all the management techniques of a cooperative?

McCormick: There were people from co-ops who came and exchanged ideas and methods and so forth, yes.

Chall: Has the cooperative movement grown here? Is there still a grocery co-op?

McCormick: There are several of them. I joined one not very long ago that has gone out of business. It started out with a great bang. It was started in the model neighborhood area. Then there was

McCormick: another one in the area of Compton that called themselves the Buying Club, and they have folded just recently. So, I don't know--I think it's because of the general inflation--high prices and so forth--that makes it almost impossible for a small group of people to really buy and realize appreciable savings. It's just not possible.

Chall: What was your particular role in the co-op, besides going out in the country and getting milk and things of this kind?

McCormick: Just about all. I was always one of those people who could always scrounge around and find things. I knew where there were some agricultural fields where we could deal with the people, or knew where there was a milk producer or something that we could go and deal with. That's just about all.

Chall: Do you consider that you were one of the leaders? You found things; were you able to be the one who dealt with the farmer?

McCormick: Yes, in many instances. But that wasn't hard to do, as I say, because they were suffering, too. It was very easy to talk to people about the general problems.

Men in the ILD and Cooperative Movements

Chall: Were the people who were working with you in the co-op movement and in ILD mainly women like you?

McCormick: No, they were mainly men. I was pretty surprised to find that most of the revolutionary movement, at least in the area where I was, was made up of foreign-born people, and mainly the men. However, in some other areas women were in the majority.

Chall: If they were foreign-born men, they generally expected, I think, that women belonged at home. How did they look upon you and your activity?

McCormick: Well, I don't think they thought it surprising; I think they rather expected that American women would be more forward.

Chall: Were you able to deal with them on an equal basis?

McCormick: Oh, yes, very well. Of course, I did find that there really was a conscious effort to get women to take leadership and to be equal members of the organization and to participate in all the discussions. There really was a very conscious effort on the part of these people.

Chall: Was that a part of the philosophy of the Communist party at that time?

McCormick: Oh, yes, yes.

Chall: And it wasn't just on paper?

McCormick: No, it was not. I would say that more than any of the other organizations, there was a real attempt to involve women. This was true on paper in the Democratic groups, and it was true about the black people, but it was only on paper. But I think the communists carried this out, as far as I could see, much better than other groups did.

Chall: So you never felt a feeling of frustration as a woman, as against how you might have been treated if you had been a man?

McCormick: No, I can't say that--not in those early days, no. As a matter of fact, I think there was every effort put forth to help me to get out and participate.

Chall: But you were one of the few women?

McCormick: Yes, in my area.

Chall: These men who were foreign born--had they come over from--?

McCormick: Poland. Now, I'm just talking about a small group--the ones in my immediate area. They were from Poland, and I think there may have been one person who was actually born in Russia. Most of them were from Poland and from other eastern European countries.

Chall: Did they come with a social philosophy from these countries?

McCormick: Yes. Several of them were very intellectual--men who had been very active in the revolutionary movement in Poland and in other places.

Chall: So that in the depths of the Depression, they would say, "Aha, this is the way I always said it was going to be."

McCormick: They knew. Yes, they knew. They were people who had read a great deal, and were also experts in their trades.

##

Chall: As we were discussing, the men with whom you were working had come here committed leftists, or at least to social change.

McCormick: Oh, yes, very dedicated people. Some of the finest people that I've ever met were those men who had been skilled artisans. One of them I remember very well as a very fine furniture maker who was also an intellectual. He had been very active in Poland.

Chall: I guess most of the people you met were nonreligious. Were they atheists?

McCormick: I never met any that were religious or that claimed any connections with religion. They were religious in the true sense of the word, but they were not connected with any religious groups. I think they were all Marxists--all materialists.

Joining the Democratic Party

Chall: Now, let's see, we're in the period of the thirties, I guess. At the same time I think you told me earlier that you were also a member of a Democratic club.

McCormick: Yes, at the same time I had gotten into the International Labor Defense and was active in the Democratic club.

Chall: You were active in them simultaneously?

McCormick: Yes.

Chall: What Democratic club was this?

McCormick: That was the Florence Democratic Club. It was one of the largest ones. Yes, one of the largest of the Democratic clubs at that time. And very active, a very active group.

Chall: Now, was there more of a tie-in, let's say? Were there many people besides you who were members of both the Democratic party and the ILD?

McCormick: No. Because I saw that many of the communists at that time did not approve of going into these organizations. They felt that it was just another reform thing that could end in

McCormick: nothing--no advance for the working people. So therefore many of them did not come into that, you see. But there were a few who did.

Chall: And why did you?

McCormick: Well, I really sincerely believed that there was a great opportunity to begin a cooperative society and here in California it could start through using the Democratic party as the vehicle through which you could get political power. And I really believed it. As I say, I could just see the cooperative moving and eating away the sands, like the sands of the river, and eating away the foundations of capitalism. That was going to do it. I just thought that as soon as people know the word, as soon as they hear about this marvelous thing, there is nothing to it--you know, they will all come in and that's it.

Chall: Did you go in at the time that the EPIC movement was getting started, or had you been in before?

McCormick: No, it was really just the beginning. It was the beginning of that.

Chall: So that propelled you into the Democratic party, or otherwise you wouldn't have done it?

McCormick: Oh, no, I had no feeling for the Democratic party as such, except that this was the political vehicle through which you might be able to take power.

Joining the Communist Party

Chall: Having then gone into the Democratic party, what was your function?

McCormick: Well, I was the secretary of that club for a long period of time and then, after the election in 1934, it began, of course, to grow smaller because we'd been defeated. So I concentrated more of my activities in the International Labor Defense from then on. Then I joined the Communist party in 1934.

Chall: That's when you decided that the Democratic party was such that...

McCormick: I thought it was not really going to take us to the great cooperative society that I wanted to see and I looked for something else that was going in that direction. I thought the communists more likely had the answer. I began to read, of course. They were then bringing me materials. I was reading the Western Worker, had read Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto, and began to read all the current Marxist materials.

Chall: You had what would have been maybe a two- or three-year membership in the Democratic club? And that's all?

McCormick: Yes, just that brief time.

Chall: So from that time on your activities were with the Communist party?

McCormick: With the International Labor Defense mainly because I was asked to assume a role of leadership in the district office and I did. I accepted that.

Chall: And what was that? What did that entail?

McCormick: Well, that entailed being the executive director there of organizing campaigns, raising funds, and keeping the organization going.

III EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE, 1937-1950

Chall: Well, let's get into that experience then. Were you paid?

McCormick: Well, not really. We were given a stipend, an expense account, you know, which sometimes covered and sometimes didn't. Because we were a very poor organization.

Chall: Were you the main person in the office?

McCormick: Yes. I think we had three other people working in the office at that time--a legal secretary, and someone who did the technical office routine work--typing, etc. These were mainly volunteer people who worked their heads off, simply for expenses. Julia Walsh worked many years--a top legal secretary.

Chall: Were you all women in the office?

McCormick: Henry Eaton was there as a field secretary. There were three women and then we drew in a man to act as an assistant there because it was almost impossible to function with just women doing the work.

Chall: Why was that?

McCormick: Well, because there were places that women couldn't go; there were things that women couldn't do in dealing with some people, and we would have to accommodate those things. In some of the strike situations a man could do certain things that women simply couldn't do. So that's the way we functioned.

Chall: So he came in as the assistant?

McCormick: We had, yes, an assistant secretary, sometimes called the field secretary, in charge of membership or field work or whatever was needed at the time.

Chall: Was he working as your subordinate?

McCormick: Yes, however, I shouldn't have really said subordinate because we operated with a staff. We called staff meetings and everybody participated in them. It was a very democratic group. We proceeded during the week and then, of course, had our council meeting, which had the final say-so, once a week. It was a very democratic group.

Of course, there were eternal emergencies, cases coming up which I had to decide--whether or not we were going to participate in the defense of that person--because it maybe came up today, and you couldn't wait for a council meeting to discuss whether or not you were going to handle somebody's defense. You had to go right now, or you had to go and post bail, and so you had to make decisions about whether or not you were going to. That was my responsibility.

Chall: Could you give me some idea what a day was like? What year was this now, about 1935 or '36?

McCormick: I think I went in there in '37--January. I was there thirteen years. I was there until we closed the office, and then continued the work out of my home.

Chall: Now, let's see, you had a child then about nine.

McCormick: Yes, and meanwhile an aunt had come out from the East, an elderly woman who had lost what she had through the stock market and whatnot and the difficulties of '29, and she came to live with me and took care of the children and the house, while I was free then to go and do.

Chall: Now, your name was the same as your husband's--you used your married name?

McCormick: Yes.

Chall: Did this create problems? What was your husband thinking of this--your going out and working so publicly in a radical organization?

McCormick: Well, he really didn't like it. There wasn't really much that he could do about it, I guess, because I think I would have done it come hell or high water. Later he began to become very sympathetic because at this time the studios were organizing and he became active in the labor movement himself as a member. He had a great deal of feeling for what was

McCormick: going on, and many times when there was a really dangerous situation--in Imperial Valley on one occasion, another time in Yuma--he took off from his work and went along because he felt that he didn't want me to go by myself. I could afford the luxury of working at this sort of thing because he did have a job, so that made it possible for me to do so.

Chall: And you also had someone you trusted in the home.

McCormick: Yes. So it made it pretty secure. But at that time the women who were in the party were just excellent.

I can remember one schoolteacher who used to come and she'd say, "You ought to go to this conference. It would do good for you to go." And I'd say, "Well, I can't because of the children." "Well, I will stay with them," or "I will get someone who will stay." They were wonderful about trying to get other young women into activities and supporting them in that way, you see, of helping out. They were really very, very fine.

Chall: I would like to know about some of the major, and also some of the ordinary day-to-day, activities that would go on in this office.

Defending Leafleters, Demonstrators, Aliens, and Anti-Fascists

McCormick: When the door opened in the morning, you usually had to check the local jail because you were most apt to find that there were several people in there who were in for leaflet distribution or for something. Usually that was it, violation of the leaflet ordinance.

Chall: What kind of bail would have to be posted for those people?

McCormick: Well, it depended so many times on the judge. If you got a hold of one of the judges who hated all radicals and who hated people in general, you might have to post several hundred dollars. If you got a hold of one who didn't, who was a little more liberal, you might have to post \$100. It depended.

Chall: And would they ultimately be tried?

McCormick: Yes, they certainly were. We would be at a hearing. This was also the job of the organization--to mobilize people to go to the trial, to put out publicity about it, and to carry on the defense.

Chall: What did you do about lawyers?

McCormick: We had a group of lawyers headed by Leo Gallagher, who was the former dean of the Southwest Law School, who was, I suppose, the leading person in civil liberties in Los Angeles. Then there were others like Al Wirin of the ACLU; and there was Grover Johnson, who came into civil rights work; and there were a number of other--Jack Frankel--young lawyers, many of whom would just simply take one of these cases along with what else he was doing as his contribution to the general thing on civil rights.

Chall: I see. At that time--this was in the thirties--they were willing to assume this responsibility?

McCormick: Yes. There were some who were brave enough. There weren't enough. There never were enough. But there were many of them, very fine young men, who would take one of the cases. There were Sam Houston Allen and Allan Carson and later Selma Bachelis. There were Jim Legallez in San Bernardino, Alfred Blaisdell of Calexico in Imperial Valley, George Shibley of Long Beach, and Mr. Henderson, a blind attorney, of Bakersfield. They were extremely courageous people who gave of their time and abilities and support in the cause of civil and human rights. I don't know what we would have done without them.

Chall: This would be just a contribution, since you couldn't pay them?

McCormick: Well, no, we tried to. We tried to pay them, but, of course, it never was what the case was worth. But we did raise funds for the defense and tried to do as well as we could by the lawyers, of course.

Chall: Did some of your people actually go to jail?

McCormick: Oh, yes. That was a common occurrence.

Chall: Just for leaflet distribution?

McCormick: Just for leaflet distribution, yes.

Chall: How long would they stay in jail?

June 3, 1939.

V. 1439

I.L.D.
127 S. B'way.
Los Angeles
Calif.

Dear La Rue:

Thought you might be interested to know outcome of the battery charge against Hagans. I dispensed with a jury and tried the case before Justice Vickizer.

Complaining witness had one other witness; we had two besides the defendant. Case took about one hour to try, at end of which defendant was acquitted.

My witnesses were terrible. I was scared stiff of a conviction, but I argued my head off on the subject of burden of proof, reasonable doubt, etc.

Now, the WPA officials are reluctant to put Tony back at work. The Workers' Alliance grievance committee has taken up the case. The WPA officials told them to get a statement from me of the judge's remarks in passing judgment. I refused, - told Ted LaRue, chairman of the grievance committee, to tell those monkeys that the case was tried once, which is enough.

However, I did make an affidavit to the statement made in court after conclusion of the trial, by complaining witness. The judge suggested that he and Hagans shake hands and "forget it". In that connection, Steele, the complaining witness, told the judge "I never intended to press this case in the first place; the only reason I made the charge was to get Hagans off the job", or words to that effect. He also said the same thing to me before trial, and I sent him to the D.A. to have the case dismissed before trial, but it didn't work. As it turned out, I'm glad it was tried instead of being dismissed, for now the record as to Tony is clear.

Don't get me wrong, - I know that \$10. is totally inadequate as a fee in a case of this kind, but I also understand that the ILD is not affluent, - hence the modest request. As it turned out, I did not handle the matter as an ILD case, so that's out. Further, I'll not get a dime from Tony.

I dropped in to say "Hello" the other day, but was unfortunate in not seeing you. I guess the girl gave you my card.

Kind regards and best wishes,

Yours very truly,

J. E. Steele

*Joe Steele
to you*

Carroll Peirce

March 6, 1939

Los Angeles Police Commission,
City Hall,
Los Angeles, Calif.

Gentlemen:-

On February 11, 1939, about 2:30 in the afternoon, Mr. Carroll E. Peirce, 72 years of age, was accosted by Police Officer B. Z. Sims, Badge No. 2122, on Pacific Avenue, in San Pedro.

He asked Mr. Peirce what he was doing with some yellow papers Mr. Peirce had under his arm. Mr. Peirce told him that they were invitations to a birthday party for himself. Officer Sims told him that he had been trying to catch him for some time and that he was now under arrest for distributing hand-bills without a permit. Mr. Peirce admitted that he had been giving out invitations to his party, and he did not believe this to be a violation of the law. Officer Sims cursed Mr. Peirce and told him that if it were not for his age, he, Officer Sims, would give him a good beating "because he hated Communists".

Mr. Peirce was taken to San Pedro Jail and booked on a charge of distributing hand-bills without a license. His personal effects were taken from him, including an address book, a book of raffle tickets, 7 movie tickets, and a note book on which Mr. Peirce had written the badge number of the arresting officer and his partner. The officer then took his glasses from him and told him that he was doing this so that the other prisoners would beat him up.

After friends had put up bail for Mr. Peirce and he was leaving the jail, he asked for the return of his property. The officer refused to give him his address book, the raffle tickets, the movie tickets, and returned the note book after tearing the cover off. These articles are still in the hands of the San Pedro Police Department.

This incident is only one in a long series of persecutions and discriminations practiced on suspected radicals in the San Pedro Area by Los Angeles Police officers. Repeated protests have been made against San Pedro officers for their brutality practiced on persons in their custody.

In order that such things will not happen in the future, we ask that Officer Sims, who arrested Mr. Peirce, be dismissed from the force, as unfit to carry out the duties of a police officer.

P.S. Attached is a copy of the invitation which Mr. Peirce had when arrested.

Respectfully yours,

LaRue McCormick, Executive Secretary
INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE
Southern California District

McClellan
In the hearing of
to prevent affects under
Leffel ordinance

Carroll
Peirce
Case

In the Municipal Court, City of Los Angeles
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

<u>People</u>	Plaintiff.
vs.	
<u>Carroll Peirce</u>	Defendant.

No. _____
SUBPOENA

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA SEND GREETING TO:

Wm Smith Board of Supervisors
Raymond Height Board of Police Commissioners
Judge Ben B. Lindsey Superior Court
Judge Leon Yankwich - Superior Court
Judge John Beardsley - Superior Court

WE COMMAND YOU that you appear and attend a session of the above entitled Court to be held in Division 7 at Room No. in the Hall of Justice Building located at Temple & Broadway on the 13 day of March, 1939, at 9:30 o'clock A M., then and there to testify on the part of the Defendant in the above entitled action, now pending before said Court, and for a failure to attend you will be deemed guilty of a contempt of Court, and liable to pay all damage sustained thereby by the party aggrieved and forfeit one hundred dollars in addition thereto.

Witness the Honorable Presiding Judge of the Municipal Court, City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles, State of California, attested by my hand and the seal of said Court this 9 th day of March, 1939.

R. L. HOLADAY
W. S. DINSMORE
Clerk of said Court

(Seal)

By H. L. Shaffer Deputy.
H. L. SHAFFER

McCormick: Well, sometimes they'd get a ten-day sentence and sometimes it would be thirty days. Of course, there were demonstrations going on at the same time by the unemployed movement before the county charity department demanding help and relief.

I remember one group that was given a year's sentence. Some of these young people had gone to the Olympics that were held in Los Angeles [1932]. At an intermission, three or four of them jumped out onto the track with signs on their backs "Free Tom Mooney," and ran around the track. They were given a year's imprisonment--a year in jail. I won't say prison because a year was the maximum for the misdemeanor.

Then there were those who were arrested for a demonstration in front of the county charities where they had a delegation going up. As the delegation went up to see the people, they were met by the Red Squad--at that time like the SWAT team they have now. They beat and clubbed them, then arrested a number of them. Those people got a year in jail.

So, you see, we had always a number of people in jail and in addition to that we were raising funds, supplying prison relief and helping the families of those who were in San Quentin. I've forgotten now, but there were over twenty who were in San Quentin at one time. They were arrested under the Criminal Syndicalism Law. Although they were subsequently, on appeal, freed, they actually spent their year in San Quentin and some of them more.

Then there were, of course, the deportations of the foreign born and we were very active in that. If you recall, in 1931, I think, there were seventy-one thousand Mexicans shipped back across the border. These were people who had come here to work on the railroads, work in agriculture, and as soon as the Depression began to deepen they [Immigration and Naturalization Service, INS] simply just loaded them into wagons and shoved them back across the border. So we tried to help those people. In some cases we were very successful and in the main we were not because they did shove them back.

Then there were the political deportees. People who had come here from--some of them were Russian born; some of them were Chinese. There were people from various parts of the world, from Bulgaria, I remember--other places--who were held for deportation as members of the Communist party or who had been picked up in various raids--the old Palmer raids still had those repercussions, you know. There were people who had been

McCormick: arrested during those, and who might be arrested on a misdemeanor of some kind, and who were then subject for deportation, and we would have to defend them.

So there was so much to do in all these cases. In addition, we were raising funds for the anti-fascist movement in Europe. We sent Leo Gallagher to Europe, to Germany, to defend the young man who was charged with the Reichstag fire.

Chall: Oh, did you?

McCormick: He was kicked out of Germany, of course.

Chall: I'm surprised that you could do that.

McCormick: Well, in the beginning, you see, there was the feeling on the part of many people that fascism would change somewhat, and that there were still democratic rights to be had, and that you could still carry on defense in the courts, and that you could fight fascism in the courts there. I think the Reichstag fire trial just about proved it that it wasn't possible to do that.

But there were people imprisoned--so many of the people who today are holding leading positions in some of the European countries were in those days in the prisons of their country for their revolutionary activities. We raised money for international cases as well as the things that were going on here. Of course, the Scottsboro case was going on and that was a very big case. It took a great deal of time, and money, and energy of everybody.

Chall: It sounds as if you were busy all the time.

McCormick: All the time; there was never a dull moment. [laughter]

Defending Agricultural Workers

Chall: You talked at one time about the Imperial Valley. Did you actually work with the labor organizers? Those were the cotton strikes primarily--in '36, '37.

McCormick: Yes, I went to Imperial Valley and to Yuma, mainly, which was where the lettuce strikes were centered then. That was also during the Depression, so there were great numbers of people

McCormick: coming in from Oklahoma and Arkansas who were stranded there in that area. Of course, the growers took advantage of it to pay practically nothing to the people who worked in the fields. When there were strikes, we went wherever they were, and tried to help---raise money to get people out on bail, furnish lawyers.

Chall: Were you working in cooperation with the International Cannery and Agricultural Workers Union?

McCormick: Yes, the old UCAWU, the United Cannery and Agricultural Workers Union. Yes, of course.

Chall: Did you work in concert with them? Were you planning together, or did you just defend them?

McCormick: Not really. We were concerned mainly with the defense. However, we did meet with them, and necessarily, because you had to plan the defense. In some instances, you might find that you couldn't possibly raise enough bail.

I remember one case in Bakersfield where we couldn't possibly raise enough bail and so we simply raised the strategy of letting them fill the jails and carrying it on from there. That wasn't too successful either, I might add. So to that extent, you did meet and outline defense, which, of course, you had to since the membership of the union were involved.

Chall: When they would plan these major strikes?

McCormick: Usually what happened in the agricultural fields was that it was largely unorganized. In those days what would happen was that great numbers of people would come out from these depressed areas in Oklahoma and Arkansas looking for something better. They would land in the agricultural fields, either in response to a leaflet put out by the labor contractors, or whoever, and they would find themselves in an area where they needed cotton pickers. Only there were three times as many people there as were needed. In that event wages could go down to 25¢ a hundred for picking cotton. Now, the excess people would go on strike--what they called going on strike. However, many times they really knew nothing about union activities, nothing about it at all. They were simply people in their misery who got together and said, "We're striking."

Chall: It was hard to withhold your labor when it wasn't even being asked for.

McCormick: Yes, that was the whole point.



La Rue McCormick bailing out strikers in Runnymede strike, Pasadena, California 1939. Agricultural workers (CIO) from the Runnymede Egg Farm arrested for picketing home of the farm's owner in Pasadena.



Strikers' camp at Corcoran, California--October 23, 1939
Photo: Merritt Butler, *People's World*

International Labor Defense
Equal Justice Autumn, 1940

LABOR in the COURTS

Know your RIGHTS And Assert Them

The following suggestions for persons arrested for labor or political activity have been prepared for us in NEW YORK CITY by the New York Legal Staff of the International Labor Defense. Similar material can be prepared in other cities and states, consulting local counsel on changes which should be made in the light of state and local ordinances and court procedure. ANY ORGANIZATION is at liberty to use this material.

* * *

Every American worker should try to remember a few practical points about the law and the courts. This is true even if one may never have occasion to make use of them.

ARREST

1. Any person may be arrested by a police officer for a crime committed in the officer's presence. If a police officer attempts to arrest one for a crime not committed in his presence, he must have a *warrant of arrest*.

2. A *warrant of arrest* is a document which names the person to be arrested, the crime with which he is charged, the date when and the place where the crime was committed, etc. Above all a warrant of arrest must bear the signature of a judge and the seal of the court from which it is issued.

One who is about to be arrested under a warrant of arrest is entitled to see the warrant. The police officer or other official must show the warrant to such person upon request. The official must also, if requested, exhibit his badge showing that he is an officer of the law.

3. A person who is arrested must be taken at once to the nearest police station to be *booked*. Booking means that an official record is made of the arrest.

4. A person who is *booked* in a police station should give his name and address to the authorities, and no more. He is not required to give any information or make any statement whatsoever to the

authorities until he has seen his lawyer. This is a legal right of which no person can be deprived. One should insist upon his rights and not yield to threats, no matter by whom made.

Therefore, one who is under arrest, having given his name and address to the authorities, should demand his right to see his lawyer or his friends through whom he might obtain the services of a lawyer. He should make no statement whatsoever or enter into any conversation with any police officer or any other official concerning the charge upon which he was arrested, or concerning any other matter.

5. A person under arrest is entitled, while in the police station, to three telephone calls free of charge, and to as many others as he may see fit to make upon paying for them. These telephone calls should be used by him to get in touch with his lawyer or with his friends.

A person under arrest is also entitled to get in touch with his lawyer or friends by letter, and for that purpose a stamped envelope must be given him upon request.

6. After being *booked* in the police station, the person under arrest must be taken without delay before a magistrate (judge).

In this case it is well to remember that in the City of New York, there are night courts as well as day courts. Anyone arrested between the hours of 3:00 or 3:30 o'clock in the afternoon and 10:00 o'clock in the evening, but before 3:00 o'clock of any afternoon must be taken between those hours to a day court.

WHEN YOU ARE IN COURT

1. While waiting in the detention pen of the Courthouse for his case to be called, the accused person is entitled to communicate with his lawyer or friends. Unless he has already done so by a telephone call made at the police station, it is advisable that he should make full use of this opportunity. For this purpose he is entitled to make ONE telephone call free of charge and as many others as he may see fit to make upon paying for them.

2. Should he be unable to reach his lawyer or his friends by the time his case is called by the Court Clerk, it is important to know something about (a) *pleading*; (b) *adjournment* of the trial; and (c) *bail*.

(a) *pleading*: When the accused person is called before the judge, a *complaint* must be read to him. This is a document which must state the nature of the crime with which he is charged and the time and place where it was committed. He will then be asked to plead to the charges, that is, whether he is guilty or not guilty. By pleading guilty, the accused waives a trial; his case is over except for the punishment which the Court will impose upon him. If he wants a trial, he should always plead *not guilty*.

It is customary to plead *not guilty* in all cases where the accused has had no opportunity to see his lawyer. By pleading *not guilty* he preserves all his rights.

(b) *adjournment*: It is not advisable to stand trial without having one's lawyer or one's witnesses in court. Every person accused of a crime is entitled to an opportunity to obtain a lawyer and witnesses. For this reason, he must be given a postponement of the trial upon his asking for it. This is called an adjournment of the trial.

Do not ever go to trial without your lawyer or witnesses being in court.

(c) *bail*: Pending trial, one who is charged with a crime is entitled to his liberty, that is to be released on bail. By bail is meant that the accused person or somebody in his behalf, deposits a sum of money in an amount fixed by the Court, or deposits a bond, or puts up real estate, as security that he will be present in Court on the day of trial. But, and this is very important, one who is accused of a crime has a right to ask the Court that he be released on his own recognizance, that is, in his own custody, on his *word* that he will be present in court on the day of trial. This is particularly true where the charge is a trivial one. In stating to the Court your reasons why you should be released in your own custody, one should mention this fact to the Court, and point out to the Court, if it is a fact, that he is a responsible citizen; that he is a family man; a resident of the City of New York for many years; a member of a trade union or of any other responsible organization; and anything else which might show that he is a responsible individual.

If despite all argument, the Court should insist on fixing bail, one should then urge that the amount of the bail should be low, and that is to say, consistent with one's means, etc.

On this occasion and *for this purpose only* be your own lawyer. Argue with dignity, persuasiveness and effect.

THE BILL OF RIGHTS

The Bill of Rights which is a part of the United States Constitution, guarantees to every person certain rights, among them, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, security of one's person and home.

Freedom of Speech: This means more than the mere right to express an opinion freely. It includes the right to picket, the right to hold public meetings, etc. It is well to know that a public meeting may be held in the City of New York without a permit therefor from the police or any other authorities. As a matter of fact, if you are holding a lawful public meeting, and some person without authority disturbs the meeting, you are entitled to have him arrested.

Freedom of the Press: This includes one's right to inform the public about political, social or economic

matters through the distribution of leaflets and handbills, or any other literature.

Search Warrants: It is the law of the land that no man's home shall be visited against his will by any public officer, be he a police officer, detective, immigration inspector, or any other official, for any purpose whatsoever, except when in possession of a *search warrant*. A search warrant is a document which describes with definiteness the premises to be searched, and the papers or effects to be taken away. It must be signed by a Judge and must bear the seal of a court of law. Upon demand, the officer executing the search warrant must exhibit it. Upon demand he must also exhibit his badge showing that he is an officer of the law. The search warrant is the limit of the officer's authority. It is wise to demand that the officer show his authority and exhibit the search warrant since only those premises which are specifically described in the search warrant may be searched and no other; only those papers and effects specifically described in the search warrant may be seized and no other.

The right to be secure against unlawful search and seizure is a broad and comprehensive one and includes one's union headquarters, club rooms or any other premises belonging to an organization under whose auspices any gathering is held.

It is the law of the land that no person shall be compelled to be a witness against himself. This means that a person accused of a crime cannot be compelled to make any statement whatsoever to any police officer, District Attorney, Grand Jury, Judge or anybody else. It is well to remember that one who is taken into custody by the immigration authorities cannot be compelled to make any statement.

**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND ASSERT THEM
IN PROTECTION OF YOUR LIBERTY!**

DEFEND the BILL of RIGHTS

•
GIVE for the aid of the victims of
Criminal Syndicalism Laws
Vigilante Terror
Negro and Alien Baiting
•

Send your contributions to
INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE
112 East 19th Street, N. Y. C.
HON. VITO MARCANTONIO, Pres.

Chall: But they would create or foment trouble in the fields, I guess?

McCormick: No, on the contrary. Most of them were people who were just... I can well remember some of those situations.

Chall: Can you describe a couple of them?

McCormick: Well, I was going to tell you how little many of them knew. I remember going to the union hall one day and there was a man who used to come in and help us a great deal and he didn't show up for four or five days. When he finally did, I said to him, "Oh, I was so worried about you." I said, "Where have you been?" Because people had been killed there by the growers. Several of them had been shot and killed and their bodies just dragged out to the edge of the field and just left. So I said, "I was worried. What happened to you?" He said, "Well, ma'am, I had to go picking cotton so's I could afford to strike again." Because, you see, essentially he knew nothing about labor unions or about activities of that kind.

They were simply people who were the excess of the labor market--not needed--and the growers hated them. They wanted many of them there so that they could get very low prices. But they did not want them. They did not want their children in the schools. They didn't want them around. So they lived on ditch banks, and in tents, and in hovels, however they might. Of course, when there were some confrontations with the sheriff, then a number of them would be arrested, many of whom knew really little or nothing. They only knew that they had to get together and that they had to have something.

The growers would utilize the fact that at this time, in 1937, the federal government had established some camps where they could have a tent and where there was running water and where there were latrines. However, if those workers took their families and went over to those camps to live and the grower knew about that, he wouldn't hire them. That was to keep the federal government out of their business. They resented the federal government very much. So it was difficult to get some of them off the ditch banks and into the federal housing, even into something better, because they lived in hopes that tomorrow they might go out and get to pick cotton some place. Those were the conditions.

Of course, the Mexican workers down in Imperial Valley were even under worse conditions because they were shipped back across the border if the grower didn't want them. Some of them were not aliens at all.

STATE BOARD OF PUBLIC WELFARE
 506 Heard Bldg.,
 Phoenix, Arizona

December 16, 1937

Circular No. 556

TO ALL COUNTY BOARDS OF WELFARE:

RE: COTTON PICKERS

It has been brought to our attention that many cotton pickers are applying to the relief agencies, both for material relief and for medical care. At the meeting of the State Board of Public Welfare Thursday, December 10, action was taken to the effect that the rapidly decreasing funds which are in the hands of the State Board of Public Welfare are not sufficient to care for the resident needy, and may not be used for cotton pickers.

This letter will reiterate our stand with regard to transients. We absolutely cannot care for transients, for we do not have the money for state residents who are our real responsibility. Only where there is sickness or tiny children are you permitted to send them home.

Except upon written authority from Miss Bracken's office, are you ever permitted to allow a family to go on in their own car. A part of the plan for the stabilizing of migrants is that we take from them the easiest mode of transportation, which is the automobile. People are not so liable to tramp, as they are to ride. Of course the understanding is that the money that is secured from the sale of the automobile will be used for the return of the people to their place of residence.

Speaking of place of residence, we have just received information from a worker in the State of Oklahoma, to the effect that the attorney general has ruled that there is no person or agency in the state who has the authority to authorize the return of any person to the state, even though the migrant is a bona fide resident of the state. Your only "out" is to get a statement that the person has lived there, and then you should notify them that you are returning the person, even though they have not granted permission for his return. Of course, we realize that this is not good social practice, but it is the only feasible thing that can be done.

Yours very sincerely,

/s/ Miss F. M. Warner, Secretary

PRESS RELEASE

February 17, 1936

Honorable R. C. Stanford,
 Governor of the State of Arizona
 State Capitol,
 Phoenix, Arizona

Honorable Sir:

I am enclosing a copy of a letter on conditions in Arizona which I have sent to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In addition to the conditions mentioned in this letter relative to relief, forced labor and wage slashing, there exists in Yuma and Somerton at the present time such a state of lawlessness that I feel your office should take some action in preventing such vigilante terror and brutality.

Sheriff Newman of Yuma has admitted that he cannot cope with the situation; that the vigilantes, many of whom are imported from Imperial Valley, California, do as they please taking the law into their own hands.

As an example of this, I bring to your attention the case of Jess Govea, a member of the strike committee of Local # 30, United Canneries, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (C.I.O.). This man was arrested by vigilantes without a warrant, taken to Somerton before Justice of the Peace Covanah and there tried in a kangaroo court without warrant or complaint against him, sentenced to sixty days or \$60.00 on a charge of disturbing the peace. He was not informed of the charge until after sentence had been pronounced and had no opportunity to make a plea. The County Attorney of Yuma said he had no record of this arrest or of any complaint against Jess Govea.

At the time of the seizure of Jess Govea by the vigilantes, Mr. and Mrs. Graham objected to such high-handed methods. One of the vigilantes slapped Mrs. Graham in the mouth and told her husband to come with them, that he was under arrest for disturbing the peace. Both Govea and Graham went willingly in order to avoid trouble. They were taken to the sheriff's office at Yuma. The vigilantes were led by the lettuce growers.

Another striker, Frank Warren, was in his car driving away from the picket line when a group of vigilantes in cars ran his car into the ditch, grabbed Warren and beat him, breaking his nose and cutting his face with brass knuckles. The vigilantes were armed with guns, clubs, etc. Frank Warren was arrested on a charge of disturbing the peace.

These arrests are being made at the instigation of the Grower-Shippers' Association and the Chamber of Commerce of Yuma County in an effort to break the strike. We feel that under the circumstances some action from the Governor's office should be taken to curb the lawlessness of Yuma officials and vigilantes.

Sincerely yours,

LaRue McCormick,
 Executive Secretary
 Southern California District
 INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE

cc--President Franklin D. Roosevelt
 Miss Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor
 State Labor Dept., Phoenix, Arizona
 Miss Anna Damon, I.L.D., 80 E. 11th Street
 Herbert Benjamin, Workers' Alliance, 1211 Eye St., NW, Washington
 U.C.A.P. & A.W.A. # 30, Yuma, Arizona
 The Industrial Unionist, Currier Bldg., Los Angeles
 The People's World, 121 Haight St., San Francisco, Calif.

LMcC/AH
 UOPWA#9

INTERNATIONAL LABOR DEFENSE

127 SOUTH BROADWAY

Room 317

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

VAndike 6569

•••••

April 18, 1940

Dear Friend:

We have just received an emergency call from the workers in Imperial Valley where more than twenty workers are being held for deportation on the flimsiest of charges -- charges concocted by the Valley Immigration Service at the instigation of the Associated Farmers.

One of the workers, Mike Gutierrez, President of the C.I.O. in Brawley, has lived in the valley for more than 30 years. Now, because he is taking treatment at the Federal Clinic, the Immigration Service claims that he is "likely to become a public charge".

These flimsy charges are, of course, only a cover-up for the real motives behind the arrests. The truth is that the Mexican people are organizing and the Associated Farmers are determined to use every method to smash that unity. Every day additional arrests are being made.

We cannot allow the Associated Farmers to intimidate and terrorize organized labor in Imperial County. The cases of these Mexican workers must and will be fought to a successful finish.

Will you help by doing the following?

1. Send a wire or letter to Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins, demanding an investigation of the Imperial Valley Immigration Service.
2. Circulate the enclosed collection list for funds to carry these cases through the courts - \$1000 is needed immediately.

If your organization would like a speaker on Imperial Valley, please get in touch with us at Michigan 7034.

Fraternally,

La Rue McCormick
La Rue McCormick,
Executive Secretary

IL:wm

encl.

ucpwa #9

McCormick: I remember an election down there because I raised a question of "Let's get rid of the sheriff." Politically it could be done. They would not accept the people as voters, even those who were born and who had birth certificates, because they said, "Oh, these Mexican families. What they do when a child dies, they just give the birth certificate to another one." So they just, in general, did not recognize the Mexican worker as a citizen even though he might be.

Chall: So they disenfranchised them?

McCormick: Yes, they were disenfranchised.

Of course, the local resources were strained to the limit by these great numbers of people coming into these areas where, in many instances, there weren't enough schools, and certainly hospitals and other things were probably short in supply. But where you had an agricultural area that had called the people to come there, then assumed no responsibility, or wanted to assume none whatsoever--we sort of ran around from one of these fires to the other, and tried to do what you could, first in one place and then in the other.

Chall: Your particular role was not in organizing but in helping in case there was trouble.

McCormick: That's right. That's what it was, but it turned out to be that you did have to help organize. For instance, in the Bakersfield area, while the union people were busy in one part with the people who were the nucleus of the union apparatus, I was working out every evening in the area where there were just as many workers, but who were the excess labor, who were living on the ditch banks that had had an epidemic of measles. These people were in terrible condition. It took about six weeks to get the first family to move off the ditch bank into the government housing. I was really working as an unpaid social worker; that's really what it amounted to; that was all. Because they weren't arrested. There wasn't anything really out there that had to be done, but just trying to get them into the facilities that now were available, but which the farmers were preventing.

Chall: Literally afraid to move in?

McCormick: Oh, yes, because then they knew they'd not get a job. Those were some of the conditions that prevailed there.

Chall: In that case, were you trying also to get help from the medical professions as also you had to get help from the legal profession?

McCormick: Well, I don't recall, except the health department as such. In many times, they were not of any help. There were individuals who were sympathetic and who would come out.

But, you see, generally, in an area like that, we had at that time the state Department of Housing and Immigration. It was lumped together. Now, presumably they were there because in 1913 two-thirds of Californians were aliens or were foreign born, I should say. This apparatus had been set up in the state to look after the interest of these people, but it turned out that in a strike situation or in a place where there were difficulties, this was only another group that would oppress those same people. They would come and condemn housing to get them out of there, or they would collaborate with the immigration authorities if it were Mexican workers who were aliens. They really weren't carrying out their function at all. And they didn't until the time of the election of Culbert Olson as governor.

Chall: This changed with the Olson administration?

McCormick: That changed, but, you see, you had to have some political changing. The workers knew that they would get no help from these so-called--well, from a state apparatus of any kind. We'd come in because generally the Associated Farmers--either their wives, or some member, or a big farmer-member of Associated Farmers--would be the welfare director in that area. They were the political machine. So you really didn't look for help in those places.

I recall very vividly going to see some of the ministers and asking them to help, and they would say to me, "I'll give some money. I'll do anything, but I have to live here." The word "farmworker" was just anathema to the powers that be and they were afraid, you see, to move. There were a few that had courage to do something. But not very many. They went undercover.

Chall: So despite the fact that one wouldn't expect--you didn't expect--much from the Democratic party, things did change with Culbert Olson.

McCormick: Oh, yes. There were changes.

Chall: Can you recall specifically?

McCormick: Well, the first thing was that Tom Mooney was off the list. Tom Mooney was freed. So that was one of the political prisoners we didn't have to concern ourselves with. The other thing was the Department of Housing and Immigration changed. As some of these things changed, other people changed too, you know. So things were a little bit better.

Chall: You had Factories in the Field being written--well, that was later--Grapes of Wrath, at least, called attention. You got support from unexpected sources, I suppose, from your point of view?

McCormick: Yes, sometimes.

Chall: Did you spend several days at a time in the country when the agricultural problems were most pressing?

McCormick: Oh, yes. I might spend several months there. As long as the situation was going on, as long as there was a need for it. I might go to Yuma, or I might go to Bakersfield, or wherever the situation called for somebody to be there.

Chall: You might live there for a month or two?

McCormick: I'd stay there generally under another name, very incognito. It wasn't very healthy.

I remember going to a meeting one day and the mayor of some small town was haranguing a crowd to tar and feather me. Only he didn't know that it was a woman because my name sounded like a man's name and he didn't know just who he was talking about, and so I was able to stand at the edge of the crowd and hear what they were planning or what they thought they were going to do. Dorothy [Healey] was up there at the time. It wasn't healthy to be out in the open.

Chall: Where did you stay? Did you stay in somebody's home?

McCormick: No. I went to a small--oh, I suppose you'd call it a hotel, more like an apartment--under another name and stayed there.

Chall: Was it your second name? Did you keep LaRue?

McCormick: No. I used an entirely, totally different name. You wouldn't have dared do that.

Chall: Why did you use an incognito? In order to protect your work with the ILD?

CANTALOUPES AND "COPPER MINE LAW".

The Salt River Valley of Arizona, just a few years ago was a barren desert, hot and inhospitable. Workers came in here with tractors, turned the soil, dug great canals for irrigation water, laced the desert with irrigation ditches, and filled the thirsty, dry desert soil with the water that gave it life. This valley is still hot; but the old desert has been made to bear fruit; lettuce, carrots, cantaloupes and cotton, are shipped out in long trainloads. The greater part of the labor employed in reclaiming the old time wasteland was Mexican. Accustomed to working under a blazing sun, they made ideal 'field hands'. Too, they could be made to work cheaper, as they were 'foreigners' and not likely to mix well with the native-born workers, or ~~mix~~ other foreign-born workers.

The Mexican workers in this valley were always the most poorly paid of all the agricultural workers in the West. Wages were the lowest, and working conditions the worst. Most of the Mexican workers who came into the valley were family men who brought their wives and children with them. Once settled they stayed, even under these conditions. The farmers, and the large corporations, welcomed them. They were a stable and docile field for intensive exploitation.

Last year wages in the Salt River Valley were the lowest in the history of the Agricultural Industry of the State. Cotton pickers were paid 35 cents a day. Melon pickers, vegetable pickers, packers, nailers, etc., in the ~~lowest~~ loading sheds felt the full weight of the crisis. Disaffection was rife, throughout the valley. Many of the workers were receiving Red Cross flour. Those who refused to go out and work for the wages offered had their flour orders cut off.

The Agricultural Workers Industrial League began to organize these workers. At first slowly, then more and more rapidly the organization took hold among the oppressed Mexican workers in the valley. In Glendale, Tolleson, Cashion and the other villages, branches of the union were established and the propaganda of organization spread among the workers. When the melon season came this year, the basis for the union had been established in some parts of the Salt River Valley.

In June of this year the cantaloupe season was about ready to begin. The wages offered were even lower than those last year. Pickers were offered 15 cents an hour. There are times when pickers do not work steady. The melons may not all be ready to be picked, there may be water in the field, or for some other reason, there is no steady work. It is obvious that the wage of 15 cents an hour did not offer much to the pickers. Most of the fields in this valley belong to several large shipping companies, who finance the growing of the melons and vegetables, or who lease fields to Japanese growers. One of these is the Stanley Fruit Co.

A number of organization meetings were held, at which the wages and conditions of work were discussed. The meetings were well attended and interest was good. A committee of ~~six~~ ten was elected to carry the demands of the workers to the growers. The growers received the demands of the workers with insolent rejection. One Japanese grower tore up the demands presented to him, and threw the pieces of the paper into the faces of the committee. The actions of the growers were reported to the workers. They then decided to strike for the demands presented - 40 cents an hour.

The strike began on July 3rd. Immediately the full force of the government was thrown into the strike area to break the ranks of the workers. Members of the sheriffs squad, special deputies, alien immigration inspectors, department of justice agents, had been in the field observing the actions of the workers for some time. When the strike was declared they began to molest and to terrorize the leaders. Merella and Luna were taken from Cashion into ~~Phoenix~~ into Phoenix, the ~~six~~ county seat. They were told to stay away from the Union and to stop 'agitating' or they would be put in the penitentiary. They replied that they would not stop their work in the Union. Picketing in the fields began, truckloads of workers going out and picketing the fields. The effects were immediate and good. The workers began to come out on strike in response to the appeal of the Union.

The growers determined to use terror to break the strike. On Friday July 7th the picket lines were sent to several fields. At the field of the Stanley Fruit Co., the picket line was met by an armed force of Sheriff's deputies and special deputies sworn in for strike duty.

The deputies immediately began to threaten the strikers. One deputy, Rogers, said to Carl Howe, Section Organizer of the Communist Party who accompanied the picket line; " If one of those sons of bitches jumps that fence, I'll kill you". Another, Tony Horaguena, shouted; " If any of these guys gets into that field, I'll get you first". The melon growers gun thugs, began to shove, push and curse at the workers who had jumped off the trucks. It was evident that these gun thugs were bent on provoking a battle, and murdering some of the strikers, and as many women and children were among the pickets; the workers decided to withdraw. The deputies in the meantime had grabbed ~~communist pickets~~ several of the leaders of the column and were shoving them back on the road. The strikers got back into the trucks, and said "if they are under arrest put us all under arrest". The caravan of trucks followed the deputies for several miles toward Phoenix. They were put up in the hot, blazing, desert sun for several hours on the open road, and held under armed guard for about two hours. They were then released.

That night, ^{also} the attorney for the Stanley Fruit Co., the ^{Deputies} County Attorney, the Sheriff and some of the special deputies held a conference with Gov. E.B. Moyer ~~and the~~
~~other~~ ^{them} ~~and~~ ^{it was} it was decided to arrest those who were assumed to be the leaders of the Union, and to remove them from the strike - thus crippling the Union and breaking the strike. Warrants charging the workers with "Rioting" were procured. Jack Berella, was arrested at Library Park ~~that~~ ^{Saturday} same night when he started to speak to a meeting on the strikebreaking tactics of the Sheriff. Roma and Lopez were arrested on ^{morning} Saturday ~~night~~ at Glendale, Wilson was arrested on Saturday in the headquarters of the ^{Union} ~~Union~~ ^{Tollie} Union. Lina was arrested in ~~Glendale~~, Henry Sumid, young American Worker, and son of a Pioneer Arizona family was arrested ~~at night~~ ^{on} Sunday night at his home. He was dragged out of bed at midnight, by a gang of armed deputies. He and Sadie Sumid his mother were active members of the Unemployed Council of Phoenix, which was giving strong support to the strike of the melon pickers. The R F C began to send scabs to the fields under threat of cutting off relief to any who refused. Sadie Sumid was arrested on the picket line sent there by the Unemployed Council. She was held in the Sheriff's office for five hours, and finally released.

The workers ~~xxxxxx~~ arrested were arraigned and held on \$1000.00 bail. ~~xxxx~~ A writ of habeas corpus presented to Superior Court Judge Walter Speakman was denied. At the first preliminary hearing, the ~~xxxx~~ Assistant County Attorney dismissed his stenographer so that no written record of the evidence presented could be had. The International Labor Defense Attorney, Clarence Lynch then asked for a postponement in order to get a stenographer to record the evidence presented at the hearing. The hearing then was postponed to July 19th. On this date it began in the Justice of the Peace Court, for the West Precinct of Phoenix, Judge Nat McKee presiding.

The state presented its testimony to support the charge of "Rioting". The states witnesses, Sheriff's deputies, special deputies, and Mr. Dean Stanley, Cantaloupe Baron of the Salt River Valley followed each other on the stand. The gist of their story was that there was no strike, but that about three hundred ~~xxxxxxxx~~ "agitators", came out to the field and tried to start trouble with the workers of Mr. Dean Stanley the Stanley Fruit Co. The defense put its witnesses on the stand; first the arrested workers, and later some of the members of the picket line. While the first few witnesses for the defense were testifying, Mr. Dean Stanley sat in a "grand stand seat" to watch the proceedings. Occasionally he would lean far over to coach the Assistant Prosecutor, his "legal hired hand" on the questioning of the witnesses for the defense.

The defense proved that the workers had determined to conduct a peaceful, law-abiding picket line. That no riot had occurred, that all the violence which had been conducted was on the part of the "gun thugs" used to break the strike. It was further proved that not one of the arrested workers had ever been shown to have acted in a threatening manner toward any worker still in the fields, or toward any of the sheriff's mob. All attempts to show the miserable conditions of the workers in the valley, or the unbearably low wages had to be made over the obstacles placed in the way of the defense by the prosecutor and the judge. Despite these efforts to block such testimony the workers on the stand succeeded in showing the reason why the strike occurred, and why the union was organized. The packed courtroom applauded frequently as the workers told of the solidarity of the union in the face of the terror of the boss class police. The efforts of the prosecutor to show that these defendants at the bar of capitalist

Justices were "agitators" intimidating workers into going out on strike, met with the loud laughs of the workers in the courtroom. Attorney Lynch in his summary exploded the case of the cantaloupe barons' police, and showed how the starvation, misery and desperate low, living conditions of the agricultural workers in the Valley had caused them to go out on strike. He also proved that these arrests and the attempt to send these workers to the penitentiary were efforts of the part of the police and the court, to break the union, and compel the workers of the Salt River Valley in Arizona to work for coolie wages.

The prosecutor in his closing argument cited the decision of a Utah Court in a copper mine strike in 1881. Part of ~~six~~ decision states: "Three or more men gathered in a certain place, even tho not using force, or threats, or violent gestures, are guilty of "Rioting" if their presence there tends to arouse fear for their safety in other persons". The old west of the mining days is full of sumptuary laws, and court decisions brazen in their servility to the "Copper Kings" of those days. The members of the Western Federation of Miners' faced the unlimited terror of gun thugs, slavish courts, and legislators, intent on wiping out all organization of workers.

New days and new exploiters of labor have come to the west. In the place of the arrogant copper kings of the last century who ordered their lackey police and courts to terrorize the workers; today the cantaloupe barons and the cotton kings rule the roost of capitalism. This is the first strike to disturb the unchallenged rule of these new rulers of the west. Despite the fact that the state could prove no case, the five workers held: Jack Berella, Lopes, Luna, Wilson and Sumid, were held on the charge of "Rioting" and bail set at \$700.00 each. If convicted they may be sent to states prison at Florence, Arizona for a period up to two years.

These new rulers intend to rule with the same arrogant pride of power and wealth that the ~~six~~ copper kings of old displayed. The workers here, oppressed and starving must have the support of all workers and sympathizers in their fight for living wages, and decent living conditions. This attempt to railroad militant workers should be stopped. Protests should be sent into the authorities of the Phoenix, Arizona to demand the immediate and unconditional release of the workers arrested and held.

McCormick: No. In order to physically be able to carry on there because, you see, the Associated Farmers had lists of all of the people who were known as organizers or as agitators or whatever they preferred to call you. They would simply have someone who would be after you.

##

McCormick: It depended on what the place was like and what the general atmosphere was. In those cotton strikes, the Associated Farmers would have these big newspaper articles about these horrible people who were picking cotton and the terrible agitators who were stirring up trouble--which was absolutely the other way around. The strike situation occurred and then people came in. It wasn't that people came in first. But they would stir up people or try to stir them to tar and feather people, or to do whatever they might to drive them out.

Chall: When you went in there under an assumed name, I'm sure the Associated Farmers would soon know that you were moving in the area under whatever name you had. Would they recognize you under the name you were using?

McCormick: Sometimes they did. And, of course, if you went into a...I remember in the Bakersfield strike while I was under an assumed name, where I was staying, I was certainly to be seen. I was very much in evidence in the area. Nothing happened because we had sent for a federal mediator to come in there. He came in and he was frightened to death when he saw the situation. [laughter] But he was safe, as we generally were, as long as we were with a group of people. You just had to know what was going on and try to keep your ear to the ground as much as you could and keep out of any places where you might get into difficulty.

Chall: What were you doing in the Bakersfield area?

McCormick: I was organizing the defense for these people. What I really was was an unpaid social worker because the main problem for these people was getting them into some place where they could actually live decently. That was primarily what I was doing; what I did. At the same time, I was raising funds. I was in touch with my office in Los Angeles and all of the membership who were raising the funds to bail the members of the union who were actually under arrest. They arrested two hundred or three hundred of them.

STRIKE JUST NOWAKING
THIS'S just now starting to show where're going to do with the cotton growers. Camps add.

It was in San Joaquin, Almond, cotton picking time and camp was routed out of Benicia were en route to Kern County to dammed. Cotton strike on the following Wednesday.

The delegation arrived under the banner of the C.I.O.'s United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America and organizers from the Automobiles spread throughout the cotton fields while their leaders presented the union's demands to the industry growers. Primarily the demands called for an immediate wage increase from the prevailing 70 cents a hundred pounds to \$1.10 a hundred, and for the placing of union stewards in each field to pass on hiring and on increase from the prevailing 70 cents a hundred pounds to \$1.10 a hundred.

The growers refused. They wanted to reserve the right to negotiate the wage scale later, picking cotton.

The growers refused. They quoted at only \$8.25 in contrast to \$11.19 in 1936 when the growers paid \$1.40 a hundred.

FARMERS FIGHT MIGRANT REDS
Mobilize as Harvest Strikes Threatened

(This article of the Examiner's series on the migrant labor problem - people, what the transient influx means to California's farmers and how they are meeting the situation that developed there, see preceding article by Fred Sander.)

The conquest of the Coast's radicals over California's soaring migrant population served as a trumpet call for the real "grass roots" Californians to mobilize in defense. The state's farmers and growers were vulnerable. They had been forced into depending on the new migrants to harvest their crops because the drivers in the railroads had already hit the bloody strikes in the Salinas lettuce fields and the Stockton canneries.

The San Joaquin Valley growers, who had crowded out the old timers, fruit farmers, as California's seasonal farm workers, had to be harvested were hatched by opportunists in the Coast cities to regiment the migrants and strike at harvest time.

The old timers, fruit farmers, had promptly picked up promptly - a situation that left the growers wide open to plans hatched by opportunists in the Coast cities to regiment the migrants and strike at harvest time. Such a strike, if successful, would mean destruction by an entire year's work and investment. The farmers didn't mean to take the migrants down. Their collective way to demand full play was thorough. The Associated Farmers of California, whom Kern County had just come to know as the "Reds' representatives of the Workers Alliance.

The pickets demanded that the orchard owner, approximately double the peach picking wages that were standard all over the valley. When the grower refused, a scattering of workers joined the pickets, but the harvest continued satisfactorily. Then William R. Camp, president of the Associated Farmers in Kern County, pressed one of the pickets for a basic explanation of the "service."

Neither the Associated Farmers nor the C.I.O. and the Communists, however, regarded the strikers and as more than the migrants and their families, one or all, are still in the valley. Louretta Adams and her associates are inevitably come to the valley in the Communist Party, the agricultural union, the Workers Alliance, one or all, are still in the valley. Louretta Adams and her associates are

Another group of California citizens and farmers has formed the ears of Washington with its own resolution for the amendment to the Agricultural Adjustment Act. The resolution, which passes out free groceries and emergency cash to all farmers and grants who apply for them. Anybody could quit work and keep of their young sons right and plans in tomorrow's installment of this series.

NEW STRIKE ALIVE
The farmers' first, further when the strategists of the serial found an ally in the Farm Security Administration, which passes out free groceries and

grants who apply for them. Anybody could quit work and keep of their young sons right and

plans in tomorrow's installment of this series.

graped posters announcing:

"The union will get RELIEF FOR YOUR FAMILY. No need for starvation. Food, clothing, and cash, will be given to every striker. See your local relief committee for grub assistance." The farmers protested without avail to FSA officials against the practice of encouraging and prolonging the trouble with tree support to all countries. "We are here to give aid to all farmers who need it,"

replied, "of circumstances."

The growers had better think with protests to the sheriff and California Highway Patrol that tourist squads of strangers were invading their fields and some in their operations, despite the fact that the police, officials, organized their own patrols, informed

meanwhile, despite the fact of FSA relief and the union's fiery, militant, rallies in the Kern County quarter of Shafter, in Bakersfield

and in Watson, the C.I.O. couldn't sign up enough strikers for half the cotton picking.

Los Angeles Examiner
March 2, 1939

For example, the growers

STRIKE JUST NOWAKING
THIS'S just now starting to show where're going to do with the cotton growers. Camps add.

It was in San Joaquin, Almond, cotton picking time and camp was routed out of Benicia were en route to Kern County to dammed. Cotton strike on the following Wednesday.

The delegation arrived under the banner of the C.I.O.'s United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America and organizers from the Automobiles spread throughout the cotton fields while their leaders presented the union's demands to the industry growers. Primarily the demands called for an immediate wage increase from the prevailing 70 cents a hundred pounds to \$1.10 a hundred, and for the placing of union stewards in each field to pass on hiring and on increase from the prevailing 70 cents a hundred pounds to \$1.10 a hundred.

The growers refused. They wanted to reserve the right to negotiate the wage scale later, picking cotton.

The growers refused. They quoted at only \$8.25 in contrast to \$11.19 in 1936 when the growers paid \$1.40 a hundred.

FARMERS FIGHT MIGRANT REDS
Mobilize as Harvest Strikes Threatened

(This article of the Examiner's series on the migrant labor problem - people, what the transient influx means to California's farmers and how they are meeting the situation that developed there, see preceding article by Fred Sander.)

The conquest of the Coast's radicals over California's soaring migrant population served as a trumpet call for the real "grass roots" Californians to mobilize in defense. The state's farmers and growers were vulnerable. They had been forced into depending on the new migrants to harvest their crops because the drivers in the railroads had already hit the bloody strikes in the Salinas lettuce fields and the Stockton canneries.

The San Joaquin Valley growers, who had crowded out the old timers, fruit farmers, as California's seasonal farm workers, had to be harvested were hatched by opportunists in the Coast cities to regiment the migrants and strike at harvest time.

The old timers, fruit farmers, had promptly picked up promptly - a situation that left the growers wide open to plans hatched by opportunists in the Coast cities to regiment the migrants and strike at harvest time. Such a strike, if successful, would mean destruction by an entire year's work and investment. The farmers didn't mean to take the migrants down. Their collective way to demand full play was thorough. The Associated Farmers of California, whom Kern County had just come to know as the "Reds' representatives of the Workers Alliance.

The pickets demanded that the orchard owner, approximately double the peach picking wages that were standard all over the valley. When the grower refused, a scattering of workers joined the pickets, but the harvest continued satisfactorily. Then William R. Camp, president of the Associated Farmers in Kern County, pressed one of the pickets for a basic explanation of the "service."

For example, the growers

Using the Courts as an Educational Classroom

Chall: Were you ever jailed?

McCormick: Oh, yes. [laughter] In '38 when I was running for office. It was at the same time that the relief setup was trying to send people out to break the cotton strike. They were forcing people, if they were on relief, to go and pick cotton. So the trade union movement was up in arms about this because if they got away with that they'd use it in every situation, and soon the labor movement would be wiped out.

The unemployed movement, of course, was concerned and so we called a meeting, and I think there were several hundred of us there, and it was finally arranged that a delegation from all of the organizations would meet with the head of the state relief, a man by the name of Ruel Heck.

We had an appointment. I made the appointment and we went there and he wouldn't appear--he didn't appear. As the day wore on, we held a little get-together and we decided that we'd just stay. We saw that he couldn't get out of the building without passing by us and so we decided he was going to keep his appointment. We stayed. As the day wore on, people found out we were there and more and more and more people came--a total of several hundred people in the building.

After the offices were closed--and I assumed he was still there; I don't think they could have gotten him out--there was nothing else to do. So we sat around and entertained ourselves. I did some readings from some of the books and someone else put on a little play--just one thing and another--sang some songs. And, of course, the Red Squad came and two of us were arrested as a result of that.

Chall: Loitering?

McCormick: Disturbing the peace--they had a dozen charges. So this wound up in a six- or eight-week trial. Interestingly enough, I was found guilty by the jury. I defended myself, so I selected the jury. The jury found us guilty. The judge was a woman by the name of May Lahey who was a Republican, part of the court setup, and when I came in to ask for another trial, of course, she looked down and she said, "I am going to grant your request and I am going to throw this case out because you should never have been here in the first place." There was not one shred of evidence.

McCormick: Now, to do this in the face of the Los Angeles Times, which was raging to get me put away for a while, [was unexpected]. There was a judge--dead now--Judge Art Guerin, who was paranoic. At every opportunity that he got as a municipal court judge to give any worker or anyone who had any tinge of radicalism a long stretch, he did it.

I had been in his chambers not long before that. For the first time in my life, I had gone in and asked for some mercy for someone that had been convicted on some charge, some minor thing--a woman who had tuberculosis. I felt that thirty days in that jail was just too much. I went in for once and asked him to let us pay a fine. (We never did pay fines. We had a policy of not paying fines.) He had me thrown out of his chambers, first showing me some anonymous letters. I said to him, "I'm surprised that you as a judge would pay attention to anonymous letters about anyone. What kind of thing is this?" He called the bailiff and had me thrown out. Of course, there was a big to-do about it.

Then the second thing that happened--it was a Labor Day parade a few days later and he was the leader of it, and as he came down the street in an open car, someone from the Times building, some of the Times workers, threw a roll of toilet paper. And here was the leader, this judge, going down the street with this toilet paper wrapped all around him. He looked over and saw me standing on the sidewalk in front of my office, incidentally. I could see the look in his eyes. He concluded that I had arranged that. Far from it.

Judge Guerin had also fined a woman for appearing in his court in slacks, and I and other women arranged for a large group of women to go into his court in slacks as a protest.

But the thing, I think, that incensed him the most was an accidental meeting at the home of a friend. He was with a young lady and was most disconcerted to see me in a social situation. My friend was highly amused as she retold this incident later and Judge Guerin was furious.

So when I was on trial, I saw him two or three times coming down from his chambers to hers [Judge Lahey's] and I think she was incensed to think that he was trying to pressure her. He saw the opportunity to get me for good.

It was a very courageous thing for her to do because the next day the Times had an editorial saying what ought to happen to a judge like this; and it happened. She was demoted to a traffic court. I never saw her before in my life. She heard

McCormick: the whole case. She simply made a decision that she knew was just and that she knew was right. Acting as a thirteenth juror, she threw it out. There was a furor over that.

But that was one of few women on the bench in Los Angeles. I had expected nothing from her. I expected nothing. I went with my toothbrush and all my things prepared to go for sixty days probably. And I was amazed that she stood up and got into a situation like that because it really didn't go down to her benefit.

Chall: No, it certainly didn't. Another time did you actually take your toothbrush and go to jail?

McCormick: No, no. I was arrested but never made it. Many times there were cases where they would arrest you but decide not to bring the case to the court in the interest of not having you conducting a classroom in the courtroom.

That's what we did--turn the courtroom into a classroom. Don't let them get away with this. Do it in such a way that you will educate the greatest number of people. And, of course, we filled the courtroom to capacity. We kept picket lines going if we could. We did all of the things that you possibly could to direct attention at what kinds of things were going on. Sometimes they decided that it would be best not to have a case. [laughter] There were some amusing things that grew out of those things sometimes too.

Chall: Can you think of an example?

McCormick: Well, I was thinking of a liberal-minded judge up in--I think it was in Ventura. I had prepared this young man who had been arrested on a charge of disturbing the peace or trespassing on private property--it was during the sugar beet strike. I had prepared him; I said, "Look, we don't have lawyers. You're going to have to defend yourself." We had time; we didn't have money, but we had time. So I coached him, and worked with him, and worked with him, and we considered that he would do a pretty good job of defending himself in the courtroom. This was the thing we asked most people to do if they possibly could, to defend themselves. If they were at all articulate, we said, "You do it."

The day came and Leo Gallagher went up as the lawyer for--I think there were several of them; we had decided on one that we thought could best carry on his own defense. We walked into the courtroom; the place was jammed with people--people waiting to

McCormick: get in. The judge looked down and said, "Case dismissed." And Leo Gallagher spluttered and so did I. You don't know how much work we put in preparing this case and here was this judge. [laughter] It was a victory we weren't prepared for. So we had a huge celebration. I will never forget the consternation when confronted with an unexpected victory.

They had decided, I'm sure--the town fathers had decided--that "We don't want this." Because they had had one in Nipomo which went on for several weeks and which had made a great difference. Because there were important people, especially some of the women from the community, who came to listen to this "horrible" thing--that is, they were on the other side of the fence--who remained to become active in progressive politics. So they didn't want any more of this and decided they'd be better off to just throw this case right out now, and not have us around. Because every case resulted in winning over some of the people--always did.

Chall: Then they would come into your office?

McCormick: They would come, yes, or support, in one way or another, some of the liberal things that were in their own area. That was a rewarding thing sometimes about some of these outlying areas--that when you least expected it you would find people who would support you.

I remember one little area where the librarian came out and said, "I understand what is going on and I sympathize and I want to contribute something towards it, but more than that I want to get a group of women together and I want you to come to talk to us." Things of this kind would happen. So you felt you were spreading the word.

Chall: Were you spreading it among women, do you think, more than men at this time?

McCormick: Yes, in my experience it had been women mainly because women were ones who had time to come and sit in the courtroom and listen to what was going on.

Chall: They had the time to help organize things too? Did you have people in the more well-to-do liberal community who were supporting you also financially?

McCormick: There were some, yes. There were people who gave sustainers to keep the work going. There were some of those, but in the main it was, I would say, the working people themselves and, let's say, some of the middle class who supported us.

Relationships with Trotskyites

Chall: In your work here, which was with the Communist party, were the ILD and any other activities that you participated in endangered or brought into areas of divisiveness with the Trotskyites, socialists?

McCormick: No. There were problems occasionally. I remember at one point, one agricultural strike in the Venice area in the celery fields, that the Trotskyists had been somewhat in the leadership of it, as I understand, and at the end of it there were a large number of workers in jail and they didn't have the funds, or at any rate they were sort of deserted. The ILD stepped in to get these people out of jail and to support them at that point.

Of course, from the time I came into the movement, the big opposition, the big bugbear, was the Trotskyists. While I had come to understand a little more ideologically about them, I still found them to be people who were generally disruptive. There were some that were purely intellectuals and who were not disruptive, but some of their people were really very disruptive.

Chall: One of the tactics, I guess.

McCormick: Well, it was a two-way thing, I suppose. Communists certainly weren't listening to anything Trotskyists had to say, and it would have been better had we listened to some of it, or examined it and so forth a little better, but it had become just the--

Chall: There was a war of ideologies.

McCormick: There was a war of ideologies, yes.

Chall: It certainly, in some areas, caused tremendous splits in the movement, and I would think that it would make it very difficult to operate sometimes.

McCormick: They were rather small numerically, so that most of the things I personally was involved with were on a scale that their little--whatever they were doing--didn't really matter too much. Looking back on it, I can see many things that probably I would do differently at this point in relationship to those people. I don't know whether I could or not. [laughter] The die had been cast. [laughter]

Chall: That's right. If you had tried, you would have been suspect.

McCormick: Probably. I would have been expelled from the communist movement. That was probably what would have happened.

Chall: It was a real war. You were either on one side or the other.

Frequent Candidate for Public Office, and Other Issues

Chall: Now, in 1938, was that the first time you decided to run for public office?

McCormick: I believe that was. The reason that stands out in my mind is because I was arrested during that time and the whole thing came about during that campaign as a result of the unemployed activities.

At the same time, I might tell you, the big issue in that trial [in which I was acquitted by the judge] was the fact that there had been a movement to disenfranchise the unemployed. There had been a county ruling that men and women who were single were sent off to camps, separate camps or places to live, and the county counsel had passed a ruling that this was not to be considered a residence. In other words, these people didn't have a residence, therefore they could not be eligible to vote. That was the main thing that had taken me on that delegation [to Ruel Heck's office], this whole business of disenfranchisement of people, and here I was running for office. I was particularly concerned with that.

As a result of this there was a single men's camp out off San Fernando Road; way out where at that time there weren't any houses--the end of San Fernando Valley. I've forgotten how many men were there, but as a result of the trial they had to send a motorcycle escort with the registrar out there because that point was definitely established, during that trial, that these people were to be registered: they did have a residence and they were to vote. So they sent someone out there. I often tell my grandchildren when we've driven by there, "That's a scene of my greatest triumph." I think there were three that registered out of the whole camp. [laughter] That's when you win and lose.

Chall: I guess I missed the point of this. These people who were housed in separate communities were on welfare?

McCormick: Yes. They were the people who were on welfare. If a man was single and had no job, he was provided with a room out there.

Chall: A poor farm?

McCormick: Yes, it was sort of a poor farm. These men had to work for the state or county. It was from this that the state administration was going to--the welfare administration--was going to send these men, you see, to work in the cotton fields. They also were disenfranchised at the same time.

Chall: And this was the delegation that went up to the Los Angeles relief office?

McCormick: Yes, and this was my main concern--the disenfranchisement of people. But the labor movement was there on behalf of not allowing them to use this as a means of setting labor back. And then the unemployment movement was there, and so you have people with all these interests, you see.

Chall: So you got across the fact that they should at least be registered? You got three. You don't know how they voted, of course?

McCormick: No. [laughter]

Chall: Now, how did it happen that you decided to run for office?*

McCormick: My first campaign was against Leland Ford for Congress, Sixteenth District. I ran against Jack Tenney in 1942 for state senator.

Chall: Running on the Communist party ticket?

McCormick: Yes, I ran on the Communist party ticket. The decision that I should run was made by the Communist Party Central Committee of Los Angeles, the county committee of Los Angeles, and, of course, myself.

Chall: Was this what you would consider also an educational campaign?

*See pages 102-113 for a fuller discussion of these campaigns.

McCormick: Oh, surely. [laughter] I had no more chance of being elected than anything. But it was purely an educational campaign.

At that time you needed someone who raised the issues a little bit better than the other candidates were raising them because no one was raising the question of disenfranchisement of these people. No one was raising some other questions. So I went in there with the idea of sharpening up some of these things and forcing some of the other political candidates to adopt a better platform.

Chall: How were you able to do that? How were you able to get an audience so that the same people could hear you and the other candidates?

McCormick: There were some organizations that traditionally did that, had meetings with all of the candidates. Of course, I was invited many places and went to as many places as I could possibly cover.

Chall: To spread the word outside of the communist setup?

McCormick: Oh, yes.

Chall: In those days, were you given a better audience than you would have a few years later when just the tag "Communist party" would have made a difference?

McCormick: Well, at that time the tag was pretty hard to get past many groups. You see, it was only possible when there was an election campaign for you to force some groups to let you have a platform because you were a candidate. The fact that you were a candidate made it possible--just as this charade we're seeing now that's been going on, this beauty contest or whatever they call it here--this only gives you an opportunity to meet the people to put forth your program and to win some people over.

Chall: How was that campaign financed?

McCormick: The usual nickels and dimes. There were no large contributions or anything of that kind.

Chall: Was there some kind of organization that decided where you would go?

McCormick: There was a committee and I think I had a campaign manager who generally tried to arrange meetings. Then, of course, I did a great deal of that on my own too.

FROM THE
PREAMBLE TO THE
CONSTITUTION
OF THE
COMMUNIST PARTY
OF THE U.S.A.

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED AT
TENTH NATIONAL CONVENTION,
MAY 1938

THE Communist Party of the United States
of America is a working-class political
party carrying forward today the traditions of
Jefferson, Paine, Jackson and Lincoln, and of
the Declaration of Independence; it upholds the
achievements of Democracy, the rights of "Life,
Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness," and de-
fends the United States Constitution against its
reactionary enemies who would destroy demo-
cracy and all popular liberties; it is devoted to
defense of the immediate interests of workers,
farmers, and all toilers against capitalist exploi-
tation, and to preparation of the working-class
for its historic mission to unite and lead the Amer-
ican people to extend these democratic principles
to their necessary and logical conclusion.

People of California: Unite to defeat the
Tories of today in the elections of 1938!

VOTE FOR:

Anita Whitney
for State Controller

UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED AT
TENTH NATIONAL CONVENTION,
MAY 1938

THE Communist Party of the United States
of America is a working-class political
party carrying forward today the traditions of
Jefferson, Paine, Jackson and Lincoln, and of
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tation, and to preparation of the working-class
for its historic mission to unite and lead the Amer-
ican people to extend these democratic principles
to their necessary and logical conclusion.

A
RE-DECLARATION
OF
INDEPENDENCE

ON JULY 4, 1938.

Issued by Election Campaign

Committee of the Communist Party
Room 605, 124 West Sixth Street
Los Angeles, California

WE HOLD these truths to be self-
evident: that all men are created
equal, that they are endowed by their Cre-
ator with certain unalienable Rights, that
among these are Life, Liberty, and the pur-
suit of Happiness. That to secure these
rights, Governments are instituted among
Men, deriving their just power from the
governed.

From the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE,
adopted unanimously in Congress, July 4, 1776.

JOBS, SECURITY,
PEACE, DEMOCRACY!

Wherever a progressive is nominated in the Primary
election, the Communist Party will withdraw its
candidate, to achieve maximum unified strength be-
hind a single candidate to defeat reaction and secure

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A RE-DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

ON JULY 4, 1938.

WHEN, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for the people of a nation to band together in *common cause* for the defense of *democracy and peace*, and to assume the rightful control over the destinies of Government, to which their status as citizens of a great *Democratic Nation* entitles them, a serious regard for the opinions of mankind requires that they should re-declare the principles of *Independence and Freedom* which today impel them to renewed struggle for further realization of these principles upon which our nation is founded.

Today, in a world menaced by *façist wars of aggression*, and by *treasonable intrigues* within the *Democratic Nations* on the part of plotters against Democracy, aided by the Economic Royalists and the dark forces of reaction, it is timely for *the people of America* to re-affirm those self-evident truths so clearly stated in the Original Declaration of Independence.

The history of America's Economic Royalists is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having as direct object the establishment of an *Absolute Tyranny of Monopoly Capital* over this Nation. To prove this let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

They have so plundered the resources of the nation, impoverished the producers and mis-managed the productive forces of industry and agriculture as to plunge the country into the abyss of Depression and Crisis.

They have stolen the riches of the land, causing the concentration of 53% of the nation's wealth in the hands of 1% of its population. They have curtailed production and employment, causing the chronic unemployment of over Ten Million, creating hunger and want in the midst of plenty.

They have obstructed the Administration of Justice, using their power over the Supreme Court of the land to invalidate the N. R. A. and other Social Legislation.

They have conspired with foreign enemies of democracy, supplying arms and munitions to the invaders of Republican Spain.

They have violated the treaties of the nation, forcing an illegal embargo against the friendly people of Democratic Spain.

They have conspired with the enemies of the friendly Mexican Republic, supplying finances and munitions to the traitor Caudillo. Such tyrants are unfit to rule a free people.

But the *American People* today are heeding the call of their *Revolutionary Forefathers*. They are determined that this government shall *increasingly* "derive its just powers from the governed." And the American People are Organizing those safeguards to government that will assure "laying its foundations on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

Those *Safeguards to Democracy* and to America's glorious *Revolutionary Tradition* lie in the *unity* of the people in a *broad democratic front* of Labor, Farmers and Middle Class—all of America's toilers united in a common front against reaction—for *democracy, job, security and peace*.

To this day *we Americans* recall with beating hearts the Boston Massacre of March 5, 1770, in which British troops killed five of our people. What then shall we say to the Memorial Day Massacre of May 30, 1937, when Girdler's gunmen at Republic Steel massacred ten of our brothers? The treachery of the Girdler-Liberty League-Republican school of *treason* is of the same sort that aroused our forefathers against the Benedict Arnolds and Aaron Burrs of Washington's time. *We American Communists* do not hesitate to denounce them as enemies of our beloved land.

The inheritors of America's glorious *revolutionary tradition*, we point out, are the members of the great Revolutionary Working Class, and not these bogus patriots of the Liberty League. Communism itself, defending and extending the Rights of the People, organizing the unorganized, leading our people forward to Happiness, to Liberty, to Life, is the Americanism of the Twentieth Century. Holding, as we do, that the Socialist reorganization of Society will provide the greatest safeguard to the future Prosperity and Happiness of the People, and fully aware that the *principles of democracy* must be maintained in order to keep open the path to Socialism and the *fullest realization of democracy*, *we American Communists* appeal to all who love Democracy, whether they agree with us on other points or not, to join us in its defense.

Today America is faced, not with the urgency of destroying the Tyranny of a British King, but with the necessity of abolishing the Tyranny of Big Business, and its corrupt puppets in public office.

* THIS DAY WE DECLARE OUR INDEPENDENCE OF THE OLD-LINE POLITICIANS, AND HIGHLY RESOLVE TO BUILD A PEOPLES DEMOCRACY, FREE OF THE TAINT OF GREED AND EXPLOITATION. WE SHALL BUILD A BROAD DEMOCRATIC FRONT TO OUST THE MERRIAM-HATFIELD MACHINE AND DEFEAT THE ECONOMIC ROYALISTS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY. WE SHALL WIPE A BLOT FROM AMERICAN DEMOCRACY BY LIFTING THE EMBARGO AGAINST DEMOCRATIC SPAIN. FORWARD! FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE LET FREEDOM RING!

Chall: Do you have any letterheads left over from that?

McCormick: I may have. I may possibly have. I don't know. I'll look and see. I really didn't keep things like that. Life was so hectic then.

I ran across a button which said free somebody or other. You know that must have been a big campaign for an organization to get out a button. You know, I don't know who it was and no one in the country knows who it was. Somewhere, lost in all of the hectic days of this period was this case, and I don't know who it was.

The Family's Attitudes

Chall: And all this time your children were being cared for by your aunt. She was still staying with them?

McCormick: Yes. She was taking care of them.

Chall: Were the children participating in any of these activities?

McCormick: Not particularly. They were quite small.

Chall: Were they affected in school by the reputation of a mother who was considered notorious.

McCormick: A little. My daughter said she had one or two teachers who would comment. One of them very approvingly would say, "Where's your mother; how's your mother today?" The other would say, "Is your mother in jail today?" which was embarrassing to her. Until she was married, she said, "I always sort of felt 'gee, I wish you had been home more'" and had this feeling that it was something not right. But she said that after she married and she began to go among other groups of people, her attitude changed.

Now, our home had been a sort of center. There were all kinds of people who came there, so my children were exposed to many things that most children are not. They knew people of all races and things of that kind. She said that when she married she went out and met some of the middle-class people who were her in-laws and their friends. She was shocked to find out that all of these people had spent the Depression years just playing cards, playing bridge and doing nothing.

McCormick: She said, "That's when I really appreciated what I had at home," because it was altogether different. She said, "I used to wish that maybe we lived more like other people." But she said, "When I saw how other people really were living, I'm glad I didn't have any part of it."

Chall: Between that time, the time she wished that you spent more time and the time when she appreciated it, was there a time of resentment?

McCormick: Not really. There was never--no, I wouldn't say that. As I say with the rest of my family who did not agree with me politically, there was never any serious friction.

I know friends of my family came forward a couple of times when I was arrested and offered money for bail and things--people who had no sympathy with what I represented at all. So there was never a real family rift over this. My mother told an in-law who came into the family later one time and who tried to raise something about it--she said, "Look, I want you to understand something." She said, "LaRue may do this or do that, or think this or think that, but we are a family and we don't go out and do those things."

Chall: You ran for the Congress against Leland Ford in 1938 and lost, of course, and that didn't surprise you.

McCormick: No, no, it was no surprise.

Leland Ford had been a supervisor [Los Angeles County] who had a record of being one of the most obnoxious men in the board of supervisors against the unemployed. When they used to send delegations there, he would have them arrested. He would always have the bailiff come up and throw them out. He was representing the so-called silk-stockings area of Santa Monica. He was a real estate man. I ran against him, which irked him a great deal.

I remember--I don't have it--but he'd put a whole page in the Congressional Record. He was so furious [laughter] because I went to his area right in his home bailiwick, in his own neighborhood, and got one of the biggest audiences they ever had in the public park there. Quite a surprising reaction. He was just fuming about that. By now things were developing so fast. There was so much unemployment that people were beginning to really look around at what was happening politically. He was subsequently defeated. Not by me, of course. [laughter]

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

June 2, 1939

Miss LaPue McCormick,
 Executive Secretary,
 International Labor Defense,
 Southern California District,
 127 South Broadway, Room 316,
 Los Angeles, California

Dear Madam:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter dated April 20, 1939. I would have answered this letter sooner but have had a serious illness that kept me away from the office. Upon my return I found it.

I note that your organization is opposing, and asks me to oppose, H. R. 5138, H. R. 5643, H. R. 1650, S. 407, S. 408, S. 409, S. 410 and S. 411.

H. R. 5138 is a bill to make unlawful, attempts to overthrow the government of the United States; to require the licensing of civilian military organizations; to make unlawful attempts to interfere with the discipline of the Army and Navy; to require registration and finger-printing of aliens; to enlarge the jurisdiction of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals in certain cases; and for other purposes.

H. R. 5643 is the Hobbs Concentration Camp bill.

H. R. 1650 is the bill to deny United States citizenship to persons who believe in any form of government for the United States contrary to that now existing in the United States.

S. 407 is a bill to reduce immigration, to authorize the exclusion of any alien whose entry into the United States is inimical to the public interest, to prohibit the separation of families through the entry of aliens leaving dependents abroad, and for other purposes.

S. 406 is a bill to provide for the national defense by the registration of aliens in the United States. S. 409, to protect American labor and stimulate the employment of American citizens on American jobs. S. 410, to

LELAND M. FORD
16TH DISTRICT
CALIFORNIA

MAY RONSAVILLE
SECRETARY
110 HOUSE OFFICE BLDG.

52b

COMMITTEES:
ROADS
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
CENSUS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL DEFENSE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

Miss LaFue McCormick-2

June 2, 1939

provide for the deportation of aliens subsisting on relief under certain circumstances, and S. 411, to provide for the deportation of aliens inimical to the public interest.

I could see where you personally, and probably your organization, International Labor Defense, inasmuch as you are one of its officers, would oppose these bills, as you are Communist, being one of the few Communists that openly register as one and run for office under the Communist banner, as you did in the last November election.

I do not want to appear to be discourteous to you in consideration of your request, but inasmuch as you apparently believe in the communistic principles and I do not believe in any of the communistic principles, nor do I believe in the fascist principles, nor the nazi principles, nor the socialist principles, my belief is exactly opposite to yours. I therefore must tell you very frankly and very freely that I would be for every one of those bills and advocate their passage to protect that thing which apparently you do not care as much about as I do, i.e., Americanism.

Every single one of the bills you ask me to oppose stands for and will protect that Americanism, and so far as I am concerned, I propose to protect it and stand for it to the last ditch and I can assure you that when you ask me to oppose bills of this nature, due to our opposite political philosophies I can never support any such request.

Very truly yours,



Chall: But you felt gratified that you had raised a few questions and that you could draw such a large audience in his district?

McCormick: Oh, this was a thing that just infuriated him because I spoke at many of the churches. I was in and out of all of the churches in that area and at the public park and places. He hadn't anticipated that any radical would get any response at all. Not that it was a response to me; it was a response to the issues and the times.

Chall: Were you ever heckled at your meetings?

McCormick: Occasionally. As a matter of fact, I remember speaking in the Long Beach area when they practically tried to boo me off the platform, and I came back six months later and the same kind of an audience--just absolutely altogether different. That was because of the war--that was during the Korean War--the beginning of it, they were waving the flag--and towards the middle of it, the second time that I spoke, they were already sickened of it and a little bit willing to listen to something else.

Chall: Well, you must have developed a pretty tough skin.

McCormick: You know what the Bible says, "The race is not to the swift, not to the strong, but to he that endureth." So, you'd better be prepared to endure. [laughter]

Chall: Did you learn this as you went along? Were there times when you really found it very, very difficult and you needed help?

McCormick: I can't say that I ever found it difficult. I would like to have won many times when we didn't, but I think I probably always felt that we'd win the war and we couldn't possibly win every battle. I was so convinced that this needed to be done and so convinced that it could be done that I don't think anything would have caused me not to participate.

Chall: Now, the board of education--when did you run for the board?

McCormick: I can't remember that exact year either. I ran twice. I ran once against a woman candidate who had been put up by the Los Angeles Times, Eleanor Allen. Eleanor Allen was a woman, of no particular background that I knew of--never heard of her before politically or any other way--who lived over in the Westwood area, who was, I think, selected by the Los Angeles Times because her name began with A.

McCormick: The one black member, Fay Allen, who had been elected--the first black member who had been elected to the board of education--everyone said was elected because her name began with an A. So when they found out that this black woman was actually going to be a factor on the board of education, the powers that be got together and they decided that the next time they'd certainly make sure that she wasn't there. So I ran against Eleanor Allen, their candidate.

IV FROM WORLD WAR II TO KHRUSHCHEV'S REPORT ON STALIN,
1942-1956

The War Years and an Evaluation of the Communist Party's Role##

Chall: During the war [World War II], what was going on in your organization?

McCormick: Like all other organizations, we considered this a real fight that had to be made to defeat fascism. Because long before other groups we had been active in the anti-fascist field. We had given support to all the anti-fascist organizations abroad and here at home, too. We saw it coming; we knew it was coming. In fact, I have not had a pair of silk stockings since the 1930s, when we raised the slogan "Don't buy Japanese-made goods," because we knew the scrap iron was going to come back eventually as ammunition.

The ILD disbanded. I think a very terrible error was made in this respect. I felt so at the time, and expressed it myself as so. The feeling was--and I think the whole left-wing movement went all-out in the war--that we made errors in this respect, because we forgot that this capitalist system was not about to change, and that victims were still going to be victims, and that we should have remained in business.

However, what happened was that many of us went into other things. There were organizations--there were ad hoc committees that were set up around--now, particularly, a number of black soldiers, some who went in as officers or went into officers' training, who were denied their rights and who expressed themselves and were arrested as a result of it. So I know I got busy in a couple of those campaigns. We were fortunate enough in--well, because the war was on and it was a time to win then.

McCormick: These cases resulted, in the main--those that I knew of--in some victories and some advances for the blacks in the service.

Chall: Were these black people in Los Angeles that you knew?

McCormick: Some of them. The one that I worked particularly for was a young man by the name of Terry. In Indiana, where he was sent, he was told he could not go into the officers' club. He insisted upon doing that, and he was arrested and charges were lodged against him. So his mother called me, and we started a little committee; it didn't take too long until we won that.

There were things like this going on all over the country--all over.

Chall: You were no longer in an office; you were sort of back home, operating out of your house? People knew your name and telephone number?

McCormick: Oh, yes. They were calling me about all kinds of things that were going on.

Chall: This was a black defense--an ad hoc--

McCormick: Yes, sort of an ad hoc committee for the civil rights of men in the service. And there were other things of that kind that went on. And then, of course, there was the need for people to go into industry. Now, I couldn't get into any of the war industries because my name was right on the list that you don't hire. You couldn't even go to work in a beer bottling place, because beer labels were considered part of the national defense, you know, at that moment. [laughter] I'm just exaggerating, of course. But this was true--everything was considered in the national defense.

So I went to work in a local place in my community that was making baby beds. I worked at that for about a year. I did not like the work. It was simply monotonous. In my free time I just continued to go around to various of these committees and do whatever I could in these little places, in what time I had to do them. I soon found out that working and doing these things, too, was a pretty hard job.

Of course, my own son went into the service. He was then seventeen and he would have been drafted. He wanted to go in, so he went into the navy at that point.

McCormick: There were a few labor struggles, and I was arrested in the last of those--at the General Motors factory. I had gone there as an observer. We hadn't quite folded up the ILD at this point, and I had gone there as an observer. I think that they mistook me for someone, or someone for me--I don't know how it happened. But, anyway, I was arrested in the thing. We were defended in this instance by the trade union attorneys, in which I had no say in the defense.

So that was my last public appearance, so to speak. I was not active in any other organization or in anything. The war just about--as I say, I think we made a terrible mistake. There was, subsequently, a committee for constitutional rights, and there was another committee against the un-American activities committees. I participated in things, from time to time, with these groups, but not on any steady basis or in any official capacity.

Chall: This was during the war years?

McCormick: During the war years and after.

Chall: When did the ILD office close--after Pearl Harbor, or after the Germans attacked Russia in June, 1941, or in 1944 when the Communist Political Association replaced the Communist party?

McCormick: We closed the office March 1, 1942. I continued to work from my home.

Chall: The Communist party was cooperating with the war effort--with the status quo?

McCormick: Oh, yes, completely.

Chall: But they still retained some identity, as I recall. Their papers, The Daily Worker and The People's World, were still putting out issues. And there was an attempt, I think, through organizations to recruit and/or to make known various issues that were going to be dominant in the postwar period. Were you going around on Sundays selling papers or doing anything of this kind?

McCormick: No, I was not. I was not doing anything of that kind at that point.

Chall: Were you talking to the people who were working with you in making baby beds?

McCormick: Oh, of course. Well, everybody in my community knew me. I remember I went to a meeting one day when they had a meeting to keep black people from moving into our community. I got up to speak, and I heard someone say, "Who is that?" One of the women said, "Oh, that's our local radical." [laughter] So they knew who I was.

Chall: After the war, if I recall it correctly, there was some split in the Communist party. Was it with Earl Browder?

McCormick: No, that was before the war ended. Earl Browder had put forward the idea of a political association, rather than a political party. [Communist Political Association, 1944-1945]

Chall: The Communist party was quite split over this idea of the Communist Political Association--continuing it, I suppose.

McCormick: Well, it's unfortunate that we were such a dogmatic group, because Browder probably should never have been expelled [June, 1945] from the group. Because some of the ideas he was putting forward were very valid--the attempt to Americanize the party, to give it its complete and own identity.

However, he fell afoul, also, you see, of the dogmatic groups. They used to say, you know, that when you go into the Communist party you take the "red veil." [laughter] That was an expression they used to use.

Chall: In this controversy, was it one of the first times when many people dropped out?

McCormick: It was during the war; I'll tell you why I know it was during the war--because when some of the men came back from overseas, I remember a couple of them said, "What have you been doing to the party while we've been away?" They were quite shocked at some of the things that were going on. So I do remember that it was during that time.

Chall: What did they mean by their criticism?

McCormick: We made too many capitulations to the ruling class during the war--we were so intent on giving everything for the war effort that we let the struggle for housing and hospitals for the workers take a back seat for the duration.

Chall: Regarding the expulsion of Earl Browder, was the Communist party dominated by the people in control in, let's say, New York? Or did people like you, way out in the hinterlands in small chapters (or whatever you would call yourselves), have anything to say about the question?

McCormick: I never had the feeling that we had too much to say. And the same went for the International Labor Defense. While most of the major decisions were made in New York, we here always sort of felt very autonomous and very much on our own, because we faced such problems that they did not have. For instance, the agricultural situation and the terror in areas made our existence an entirely different thing from an urban organization centered in New York, with a very sophisticated population--a completely different sort of thing.

So we always seemed to have--I think we had more freedom of decision and operation. And I think the Communist party, to a great extent, had this same kind of autonomy. We had a county committee here, and I remember many differences with New York. There were frequent exchanges--in fact, all the time--going on.

Chall: Persons weren't expelled for taking a different path?

McCormick: Not always. But it did become quite general. There became, as I say, a sort of a period of dry rot which set in. I think it stemmed from the beginning--probably from incorrect decisions that we made--I, among others--of going so all-out for the war effort that we neglected some of the things that we should have been doing here.

Chall: Can you give an exact example?

McCormick: For example, we were willing to go along with no raise in wages because it would hamper the war effort. Or, I remember in the San Pedro area, where for years there had been a campaign to try to get a marine hospital, and we felt we just couldn't take the money out of the national budget then for some of these things that were needed, because the war had to be won first. I think this was a mistake--this feeling that everything had to go toward the war.

There were probably a lot of others that I don't think of now. But there were many, many things--for instance, dissolving organizations, like a defense organization, which should not have been dissolved. Of course, the unemployed movement was dissolved, too. The people were getting jobs; so that was a little different.

Stemming from that period, came the Duclos article.

Chall: Was the Duclos article after the war?

McCormick: No, I believe the Duclos article was during the war. That was when the big ferment started over Earl Browder.*

Leaving the Communist Party

McCormick: The Twentieth Congress--and the revelations that came out of that, of the Stalin period, really completely shook the organization from top to bottom.

Chall: Let's see, that was after Stalin had died, wasn't it?

McCormick: Yes, following his death; it was some months later, in the fifties. Khrushchev made the report to the Twentieth Congress [of the Soviet Communist Party].

Chall: So that was around 1956 or thereabouts; we'll have to check that date. [February, 1956]

McCormick: Somewhere around there.

Chall: That was the greatest blow? I don't know to what extent the Communist party was hurt by the Duclos-Browder controversy in terms of loss of membership.

McCormick: It certainly didn't begin to compare with the thing that came up with the revelations of the Stalin period.

Chall: I guess that hurt you all because you had all lived through the thirties when those trials were going on.

McCormick: That's right.

Chall: And there was such an attempt made to make them appear objective and their outcome essential to the stability of the Soviet Union.

*Jacques Duclos, in an April, 1945 article in a French communist monthly, attacked the American Communist party, particularly the Communist Political Association and Earl Browder.

McCormick: And I know my own personal opinion used to be that there must be something there. I am not in that country; I cannot know. And, certainly, a new socialist country does have many enemies. The possibility of people even within the organization becoming corrupted is certainly possible.

So I did not doubt but what they were--even though I read many of the articles of the time, I thought: Well, he's writing this because he's always been an enemy of the Soviet Union; he's always been opposed to socialism.

So I just simply put blinders on what he had to say.

Chall: This was a shock, then, to you, personally?

McCormick: Yes. Oh, of course. And then I began to reread, and to read Trotsky, which I had not really delved into before. I began to understand what some of the splits had been far back in the history of the Communist party. But more than that, I began to observe some of the things. For example, as I told you, Olga the tractor driver never came. So I concluded that it was like our own Constitution--while it might have great benefits, they sometimes never came down to the actual fact.

Then I had personal friends who came back from the Soviet Union. One of them was Anna Louise Strong--and many personal discussions--many, many discussions we had. And I began to understand a little bit better about what had been going on. Because, no matter what one may say of her, she was an incorruptible person, thoroughly honest and certainly intellectually honest. Her experiences were such that you had to question a great many things.

Chall: Didn't Anna Louise Strong--

McCormick: She died in China a few years back.

Chall: And she had begun to doubt some of what was going on in the Soviet Union?

McCormick: Well, you see, what happened, when she came back here [1949], the Communist party of this country simply treated her as though she were an enemy of some kind. She and I were friends, and no one could ever convince me that this woman would do one thing that would oppose the advancement of the people's general interest. And if she were accused of this, she had to be given her right to answer it; and she never was.

McCormick: Then, later, after the Twentieth Congress, she was invited, and she went back, of course, with a red carpet and all. But this didn't negate all of the things that had happened.

I was very impressed by her own personal testimony about some of these times. And she was certainly not anti-Soviet--not at all. But she did know what happened.

Later this same thing was true of what had happened. I began to do a little bit more reading, and rereading, let me say--rereading the things I had skipped over or had not noted before--some of Lenin's works. And I began to have a little bit better view of it. I'm just sorry that I hadn't read many of these things, or hadn't really delved into it enough.

Sometimes I try to excuse it by saying, "Well, we were so active that we didn't have time to see the woods for the trees," you know.

The final result of it was that I knew that if I remained, I was only going to be a thorn in my area, and I simply couldn't see that we were going any further with that particular organization. And, looking back at it now, I don't know whether, historically, we could have been a much different kind of organization, given the times in which we were working and the things that were happening.

Just as I talk now to some of these young people--they call themselves Maoists, you know. I see here, again, it's young people who simply aren't reading and understanding history, and that's all there is to it.

Chall: Do you think people understand history only in relation to what they can see or want to see at the time?

McCormick: Much of that is true. It's very difficult, as I say, even in doing this kind of work that I'm doing, to remain purely objective about it, because we are human beings with emotions and with interests. And sometimes we just can't be as objective as we ought to be about it.

Chall: In a case like the Communist party, or any other close association of that kind with a very dominating or dominant kind of program and ideology, there must be a need to go along--being a part of the group, and not wanting to be considered the enemy by your friends.

McCormick: Oh, yes, there certainly is that. I asked Anna Louise, "When you saw people disappearing from your group and your immediate work in the Moscow News, what did you think?" She said, "Well, I'll tell you, I didn't question it because I thought there must be something I don't know; or I won't question it for that reason--until it was too late."

So I think probably many of us do this. I think it was a matter of just not reading carefully enough some of these things; as I say, I'm not alone in it. I haven't lost my feeling about the need for socialism, at all, but I see the Soviet Union and I see revolutionary movements in an entirely different respect now.

Chall: Where is the revolutionary movement that you have hopes for at the moment?

McCormick: All--all revolutionary movements. I don't think there's one. For instance, I don't think the Chinese Maoists--of course, they're going to be different, because they come from a different historical background; I don't expect that a communist movement in China is going to be anything like a communist movement in some other place. I wouldn't even consider that a struggle in California would be anything like a struggle in New York. You're dealing with different people with different backgrounds, different hopes and desires, at a particular moment, and you're going to get different results, that's all.

Chall: There was a period of almost ten years between the time of the end of the war in mid-1945 and the Twentieth Congress--just about ten years. You never resumed a strong, active role in the Communist party?

McCormick: I was very active, but I was doing a lot of other things. I was more involved in more things in my own home and my own community. I was still very active until 1959.

Chall: Doing what, for example?

McCormick: In my own family relationships. As I say, my son had gone overseas. Then when he married he had a problem with his wife and I had to take over and help them somewhat. So I was a little bit more involved with my own family and family affairs.

By the way, my husband during part of this time was the business agent in the carpenters' union, and they were having a tremendous struggle with the international. He was very active in carpenters' local #634. He became the business agent--was arrested in the studio strike of '48 and '49 and

McCormick: the long fight for democracy in the carpenters' union. So I began to take a little more interest in some of the other things--other little aspects of things. It's true, I think for a while I felt sort of rudderless. I think that when you come out of an organized, disciplined thing of this kind, you don't immediately find out where you are going or what you're going to be doing.

Chall: You weren't questioning, though?

McCormick: Oh, yes. I had a great number of questions, and to this moment I'd like the answers to a lot of them. [laughter]

Chall: Were you questioning the party and the movement?

McCormick: No, I was questioning my own self. No, I didn't have the feeling that the movement was something over there that did that and made that mistake. We as a group of people made it, and so why did we make it and what can we do?

No, I didn't feel that way about it. I have no feelings of that kind at all.

Chall: You were personally sort of rudderless, then.

McCormick: Yes, just for a little while. I was very active in my community of Florence during the fifties and sixties fighting for FEP [Fair Employment Practices]. And there were personal problems. In the latter years--my husband died in 1964, suddenly. Then I was faced with the problem of what I was going to do, you know.

Women, Minorities, and the Communist Party

Chall: I think at one point when I asked you something about your relationships with men during your political activities, when you began to work in the ILD, you said it was "fine then." Can you define what you meant by "then," in terms of the present?

McCormick: I meant that men generally, in that period of time and in my experience, were interested in the women cadres, wanted them to come forward. I'm saying this in comparison with the general run of men everywhere. They were much more aware and in the forefront of the struggle against male chauvinism.

Chall: This was true all the time that you were in the Communist party?

McCormick: However, you know, these things are all relative. Certainly there were many times; there were things on many levels that women were not expected to do or...it's hard to put it into words. Of course, you felt that there was a discrimination against women. And many times I used to feel it was something that we were never going to overcome--that it was just the sort of thing that you could never tangle with.

Chall: Really? Was that in the Communist party? When you were working in the party?

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McCormick: Well, I didn't mean men in the party particularly. But I meant the general attitude towards women. Politically, men in the movement did want women to participate. They did want women in industry. The slogans of equal pay for equal work and all these things were very much a part of the communist programs. In actuality, in many instances, I think we weren't aware sometimes of some of the things.

For example, the whole question of women working and care for children in the early days, there just wasn't such a thing. The neighbors or friends or someone took care of children. The question of getting adequate care for children was not really--

Chall: Yes, understood.

McCormick: No, not really.

Chall: So that that would allow women to be--

McCormick: Be exploited. [laughter]

Chall: The fact that you were the one who ran for Congress and the board of education instead of a man, does that mean that no man wanted to put himself out for this--throwing it away to a woman?

McCormick: No, I didn't get that feeling at all. I think when we discussed who was going to run for certain offices we'd usually try to do it within the context of who could make the better contribution there; who would probably be an acceptable candidate who could reach the most people. I'm sure that at the time, for instance in '38, I know my main consideration in accepting it was the fact that I was one to carry on the civil rights thing [ILD] and knew the issues that had to be raised in that campaign; so I was very anxious to do it.

McCormick: There was a group of people suggested. There'd be men and women and we'd simply toss it around and decide, in this particular instance, who would be the better candidate. There was always an attempt to put forth black candidates, women candidates, Chicano candidates. There was a conscious effort to do this. I don't think it was a lack of men, who were very much out in the forefront with it, as a matter of fact.

Chall: Were there many Chicanos and blacks in the movement?

McCormick: Not in relationship to their number in the population that you might think. Well, there was a considerable Chicano group. There were groups within all of the national groups. There was an Armenian section. In the International Labor Defense we had sections of all kinds of people. Necessarily, we had to have separate meetings because of the language. And in the party, there were all of these groups represented. There was always a major effort to bring more blacks into the movement and we weren't always successful.

Chall: No, I guess that's one area that communist theory didn't work out.

McCormick: With the Mexican people--there were a great number of Mexican people in it. There again, the whole campaign for the rights of Mexicans was not at that point where you had this tremendous number of militant people and those who were able. A Mexican worker who was an alien really was in danger. He had to stick his neck out. [laughter] Among foreign-born workers, you always have that problem.

We made an effort, I would say that, to bring forth all kinds of people, to bring them together in a revolutionary struggle for this country. That we didn't succeed in many instances was partly due to our own ignorance and to the actual facts of life.

Chall: In the course of your work did you get to know other national leaders as you did Anna Louise Strong? How did you come, for example, to know her so well?

McCormick: Well, I don't remember how I first met her. Probably in a meeting or something. We just became good friends; saw each other frequently.

Chall: Did you travel to New York?

McCormick: Oh, I went to New York every year.

Chall: Oh, did you? In what capacity?

McCormick: From the International Labor Defense, I went every year.

Chall: So you met the leaders...?

McCormick: Yes. Now, when the Scottsboro case was on, for example. The Scottsboro boys. Someone had a program on the other night, which brought this to my mind, because I had them here on a tour of Southern California. I was telling my daughter some of the experiences of that tour; it was really an experience. And then when I went to New York, I would meet all of the people who were from all over the country. So I did meet most of the people who were active in one way or another, many of whom weren't communists.

When we had a conference, there were many, many people, most of whom were not communists. They were people who were in various fields of work; in the sharecroppers' union, for example--various kinds of work. You see, we touched each other's work and got together.

We worked with the NAACP on the Scottsboro case, although that came to a head-on collision over strategy there. Another place that I felt we made a big mistake.

Chall: What was that?

McCormick: Well, the NAACP felt--although they hadn't taken up the Scottsboro case in the beginning, they felt that if the radicals were out of it then they could deal with the authorities and they could get free the Scottsboro boys. We finally agreed to this, and the governor made an arrangement by which he said he would free them. He had said that he would free them and then he didn't do it. So we had to jump back in.

There were many instances of these kinds of cases where some liberals would say, "Well, if the communists didn't get in there, if the International Labor didn't come in..." And then if we stayed out, there was no defense, or the thing just simply was lost. So, I learned that people who were raising that issue were raising it for some other reason and not actually to the benefit of the people involved.

They used to accuse us of just coming into things to further the communist activities. But in many instances, it was the liberals themselves who simply didn't do anything and used it as an excuse.

McCormick: Oh, the other thing I meant to tell you. Also in the forties was the Sleepy Lagoon case. Now, that involved the Mexican people.

Chall: What was that?

McCormick: Sleepy Lagoon. That was a case in which some twenty-odd Mexican boys were arrested and charged with murder. They had crashed a party on the East side [of Los Angeles] and someone was killed. They were all charged with first degree murder. We waited around thinking that somebody was going to come to their defense. But they didn't. So I finally called a conference and we had several hundred people turn out to it and we set up a Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee. We ultimately won the case. This was at a time when the Zoot Suit riots were taking place and the Sleepy Lagoon case was the culmination of that.

Chall: Of the Zoot Suit riots?

McCormick: Yes.

Chall: That meant you had to raise funds, find attorneys, and deal with the families of these people.

McCormick: Yes, deal with the families. That was a big, big undertaking because here you had people who were not on trial for political reasons, so you had all kinds of people involved in it. I still see some of these Sleepy Lagoon families. So that was another big thing that was going on in that period.

Chall: In making decisions about how you were going to handle, let's say, a case like Sleepy Lagoon, the council would make it?

McCormick: I called the ILD Council together and told them what was happening and they agreed that we ought to provide defense. We concluded after discussion that the best way of doing this would be to set up a separate defense committee just around the Sleepy Lagoon case. And that's what we did.

We often did that. We did that even in the trade union cases. We would step aside because of this onus of the Communist party. To broaden participation in order to further the defense that had to be carried on, we would simply stay out and maybe I would be the only person in there from the ILD--only one among all the people. But I would be actively trying to build a defense committee and getting other people to participate.

Chall: But you still had to find the other people?

McCormick: That's right. That was our function and so we did. We sent out--I think I sent out two hundred or three hundred telegrams to get that thing together and people came together. When the facts were presented there, they decided that there ought to be something done and delegations were set up to do one thing and another and it grew from that. And in every instance, usually our tactics were to set up a committee around the particular case so that people would not have to accept the [laughter] International Labor Defense role as being the only thing.

Defense and Tactics

Chall: Because you were so strongly identified with the International Labor Defense and knew the technique of handling these things, did you find that people on the committees worked well with you, or would they be hostile to you?

McCormick: Usually we worked very well. There were occasions when there were people who were hostile. I simply dropped away from anything that might interfere with their participation, which was the only thing you could do. Contrary [chuckles] to what many of those people said, we were interested in winning the case and not victimizing somebody in order to put forward our particular role. Our role was to organize defense, however you had to do it, or could do it, and the broadest way you could do it was the thing we wanted to do.

I don't remember any time when there were any great hostilities.

Chall: Divisiveness?

McCormick: Not really. Sometimes we would differ on tactics. And I remember when there were attorneys who did not agree with us. For instance, many attorneys wanted to handle things in their own way. We could never go for that because we wanted to win the case, and we knew the best way to win it, and we knew it from experience that the best way to win it was to throw the whole thing open. Simply fight it on the issues themselves. Generally you would win in that case.

Now I think some lawyers could take a leaf out of our book and do much better for their clients, the recent one in San Francisco being a case in point. [laughter]

Chall: Which one is that?

McCormick: I'm talking about the Hearst case.

You see, these lawyers get off on terrible tangents sometimes and to the detriment of their client, I'll tell you that.

Evaluating Current Radical Movements

Chall: What is your opinion of radical movements of late? There's one type and that was the outgrowth of the war in Vietnam, and the marchers, and Jerry Rubin, and the rest of them. That was one type.

McCormick: I bless them. I bless Jerry Rubin and his group for exposing what was going on. I might not have always agreed with them, but I thought they needed the searchlight of attention, and they got it. It's not the way I probably would have done it, not at all, but these are different times and different cases.

Chall: Now, what about the terrorists? The Symbionese Liberation Army type?

McCormick: I live within a mile of where those young people were burned to death. I had gone earlier that day and tried to go through that area--I didn't know what was going on--and then was stopped by the police and went back and turned on the t.v. and saw their deaths.

These young people, who were undoubtedly bright young people, simply for the lack of knowing what they were doing, went off on that kind of escapade. I can't call it even a revolutionary activity really. The long way around is to organize people and evidently they felt there were shortcuts with guns and whatnot. It simply will not work.

To see young people lose their lives in a way like this--it's really horrible, because I'm sure they were unusually bright young people who at least knew there's something wrong, and that's half of the struggle--learning what's wrong. There they were simply wiped out. I don't think anybody can ever do anything but regret a thing like that. You don't want to see young people destroyed.

Chall: But in terms of their methods, their goals, it isn't one that you would espouse in any way?

McCormick: No, not at all. I can see that they felt they were attacking a system, and I also want to see another social system. But I know the only way that it can be done is to organize people and to work towards it in a method that will win people to that. You don't win people by terrorist activities. I can't see that that's going to do anything at all. In fact, I think it sets things back if anything. But as I say, these are different times and these young people, some of them have very different ideas--both of what they want, I guess, and how they're going to get there.

You see, this is the same thing that's happening over in the East side. We have a number of the young people that are--they're just wiping each other out over there in these gang wars. And it's horrible to see this happen and especially when you come in contact with the family. You see these just ordinary people with these terrible tragedies as a result of these gang situations.

V RESEARCH INTO COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL AND HEALTH NEEDS,
1976-1979

Education in the Spanish-Speaking Community##

McCormick: When I began to work again in 1976, I went into this market research, and then that led me into what I call the sociological aspect of it. I'm now working in this sort of thing.

Chall: Could you describe your present job--what you're doing now?

McCormick: Right now I'm working with this college development program, which is a program where you go into the community--doing a grassroots thing--getting little groups of ten people together and talking to them about their community needs and then seeing them individually and taking a life history--taping and then transcribing that. We are trying to determine what the educational needs really are, and then, with the colleges, trying to develop some kind of program that can really answer some of the needs of the community.

Chall: Is this at Los Angeles Community College?

McCormick: Yes, that's right.

Chall: Is this a funded project?

McCormick: Yes.

Chall: Are you paid?

McCormick: Yes, I'm paid.

Chall: And you're expected to go into a specific community--is it your own?

McCormick: No. I speak Spanish, so I'm over on East side Los Angeles, working with the Spanish-speaking people.

Chall: How do you find the people you want to talk to and interview in depth?

McCormick: Well, there are two things. They are paying them for the interview, for one thing. Secondly, so far I have been very pleased with the way in which we're able to get their cooperation and get material from them that may be helpful in arriving at something. I've been astounded at some of the things, though. The young people--I walked into one place where there were five young people, all dropouts from school, and where the language difficulties have been such that their early experiences in school were very painful, and it's difficult to get them now to accept some of the positive things. Some things of that kind. It's been a real learning experience for me.

Chall: Considering what you already thought you probably knew about people.

McCormick: Oh--and, as I say, there are such changes in people and organizations, and in attitudes towards many things; and maybe I've mellowed a little, too. So I find it really an easy meeting ground with most of the people.

Chall: This is kind of a needs assessment project?

McCormick: Yes. And it's being done at the grassroots level, which is something different. Instead of asking some of the people in the community who are already identified with certain things, you're going right down to the bottom and asking the people who live there--their ideas, and what they need, and what they want, and finding out what their lacks are, and then seeing if we can work out something that the college program can meet.

Chall: This will all be brought back to the college to some community group that will assess it?

McCormick: Yes, will assess it.

Chall: Are these people whom you're meeting articulate enough about what their needs are? Do they sense it? Can they discuss it?

McCormick: I was warned in the beginning that many people probably, if you ask them what their heart's desire is or what they want out of life, might tell you that they want to be a brain surgeon, and they've never been through the sixth grade. But I find, on the

McCormick: contrary, that the people that I have talked with are all quite realistic, and that their desires, and their general background, and their realistic approach to it are quite comparable. There's no real problem in this respect.

It's been interesting to me from another standpoint. One of the campaigns that I participated in years ago, in the thirties, in the Watts area, was where there was a special school--Gorman Avenue School--which was set up for mainly the Mexican-American children, who were sent there as retarded, when really the problem was that they spoke Spanish in the home and did not know English. And there was no attention being given to this thing. We had a campaign going to try to force the board of education to recognize these problems.

Chall: In the thirties?

McCormick: In the thirties. I interviewed a young woman the other night--well, she's not young; she's forty-eight. But she was one of the students at that school at the time, who was sent there as a retarded child. She is certainly not retarded and never was. To this day she can't read and write. She said, "When I'm confronted with it, it all runs in a blur," because those experiences that she had have just been a real block for her. But she is very active in a mothers' committee trying to do something about the gang warfare over there. Her own son is the victim of one of these things, and they killed two the other night. But there is a committee trying to get people together and work on it.

So I have met people who some way or other in my life, or their life--we touched each other at some time before. So it's been very interesting to me.

Women and Leadership##

Chall: There's one question I find that we didn't talk about and that is with regard to men and women working in organizations, campaigning, and decision-making. Do men assume leadership roles differently from women in your estimation? Is there a different way of handling either the leadership role, or stress and fatigue in campaigning?

McCormick: That's a really hard question. I really haven't given any thought to it.

McCormick: I notice as I go around recently that women are very much in the leadership everywhere. There may be a man who is the chairman, but usually the guts of the organization are the women. I notice, especially among the Mexican women, that they are taking more and more of a leadership role in the community and in whatever organization they happen to be, from organizations sponsored or supported by the church, such as the mothers' groups working to stop violent gang wars; to the community betterment groups and, of course, the school activities groups; women are the mainsprings everywhere. I'm sure you know that women are very vocal in the farmworkers union. In Calexico, when I last visited Imperial Valley in 1973-74, I found women staffing the office and giving directives to the hall filled with men workers. I did not see any male opposition to this. There may have been some, but it wasn't evident. The women in the Mexican community are in evidence in decision-making positions everywhere.

Chall: Things have changed?

McCormick: Yes. Now, as to the differences--I really can't say offhand.

Chall: Well, someone has said that women get emotional, that they are thin-skinned, let's say, that they're easily hurt, and that men aren't so easily hurt, or so emotional.

McCormick: I've never known that to be so true, or have never noticed it. In particular I haven't noticed that in organizations with which I've had experience. Well, I suppose it depends upon the kind of organization and people that you're dealing with. I don't know. I couldn't say, as to the Democrats or other groups. I couldn't say at all. But the groups I've been among, I don't find that to be true. I don't find that to be true at all. I think once women are moving that they are pretty dedicated and they're apt to make great concessions over their own egos in order to do things. This has been my experience.

Chall: I think what we're trying to find out is whether women can function just the same as men in organizations.

Chall: Oh, I think they do. I tell you, from what I've seen in some of these organizations when they decide to...For instance, the discussion I think I told you about [prior to taping], whether to picket the priest or not to picket the priest; it was women all the way around who were leading that, and making the decisions about it, and so forth and so on. It was women who spoke up. And it was also women who were the most reticent.

McCormick: Those who didn't know that such things were going on in their community, who hadn't participated in organizations, sat back. Because I talked to them later individually. But I would say in the main it was women who were making the decisions.

Chall: Do you think that it was because the women were present that somebody took cognizance of the fact that the priest had a bad heart and they wouldn't want to do anything to hurt him?

McCormick: I don't know whether that discussion would have taken place were it all men. I don't know. I think it probably is true that the women would be more concerned or aware of whether or not they ought to do it because of his condition.

Chall: In other words, they could find some other way to achieve their goal without a direct confrontation which might seriously injure that person.

McCormick: Oh, they're going to have a confrontation, but it isn't going to be the kind that would probably shatter him so.

Chall: There are people who feel that women in positions of this sort, where they would have to consider other human beings, might do so with a point of view different from that of men.

McCormick: Yes, I think women generally would. I think women are--being mothers and so forth--are more aware of personal feelings, and of health, and a lot of these things than perhaps men might be. As I say, I don't really know. I've only been around in certain kinds of groups.

Chall: We don't ask people to consider what they don't know.

McCormick: Yes. I don't participate in some organizations in the community where there may be more men active. But as far as I see, in the main, organizations that I encounter have women very much in the leadership, women in the active committees.

Chall: Of course, many times over the years this has been true that they haven't been recognized as the leaders, or been given credit even though they've done the work.

McCormick: I know I hear these little women all the time. They'll say, "Oh, my husband is the one who has the head. He's the one who can really think." But they're the one who's doing the doing, you know. And while they will say that he ought to be consulted, and he will participate in the discussion, it's really they who are the active ones.

Chall: So they need to be reinforced and supported to stand up on their own. Perhaps the women's movement may be helping.

McCormick: Oh, I think so. As I go around talking to women, many of them will say, "Oh, I'm not in favor of those women's libbers," and everything like that. But when you wind up, you find that they are supporting all of the same things, and they may only be shocked by one thing that the women are doing--that someone has said out loud, "Burn the bra" or something of this kind. In the main, they're following right with it. They're right with it.

For instance, in talking with women, one of the rewarding things was consulting with women who had been through these WIN programs, you know, that the county puts them through--county and state I guess it is--to learn to make a living. I have been so interested in what's happened to some of these women. I wish I had some tapes of those sessions.

One little woman in particular told me that she had a husband, and that she never even went to a grocery store. It was an old-fashioned home where he did everything. All of a sudden one day he came up with an interest in somebody else and walks out and leaves her with four children. She doesn't know how to drive a car; she doesn't know how to buy at the store; she doesn't know how to function without a husband. She is bereft of everything. She said she cried for three months and then she got on welfare.

The first thing they did was say, "Well, you must learn to drive a car." So she took driving lessons at this school. Then they said, "Now you have to learn some other things, so you had better enroll in a class as a community aide." She began to do that. She said, "You know, I always thought I was stupid. Now I'm going to junior college." But the wonderful thing about it is her four children. She had never thought of them doing anything except getting through the sixth grade, or the eighth grade, or maybe graduating from high school--maybe one of them, especially the boys. All of her kids are going to go to school now. And I'll tell you, they're all going to finish high school and probably a couple of them will be over at the junior college, because, I'll tell you, mother's going to see to it.

The attitude, the things that had happened to that woman as a result of this. And she said, "You know, now he comes by to see the kids and I wonder what did I ever need that creep for."

McCormick: [laughter] He's long since had an interest in several other places and he would like to be able to stop in there too. She's too busy; she's driving her car...

I've seen so much of this. I said to some of the women over at UCLA that are interested in women's lib, that I thought that maybe one of the projects that ought to be undertaken is to get six months of formal education for women in some of these areas. If you could get them through six months of schooling, that would do more than all of the talking and some of these meetings could possibly do. Because this thing is just like the pebble that you drop in the lake; the circles just keep on going. The important thing that I see is that their attitude toward education--education for their children--is what changes. And that's the only hope we have.

I would dearly love to see something done. And that's why I'm so enthused about this community college development program because I think it is going to get to the bottom of some of this. I'm not saying that great things will come out, but if at least there are two or three good programs, it could do something along that line.

Understanding and Meeting Educational Needs

McCormick: And then some of the problems in the educational system. The people who are going to help make some of the decisions are these kids who are dropping out who know what their problems have been. It's not the ones who've been successful and finished and gone on to college. It's going to be the kids that didn't go, if you can get hold of them at some point.

Chall: Are you interviewing them too?

McCormick: I want to. I haven't had the time. I'm going to have to do it on my own. I really want to do it because I want to find out what their attitude is.

Now, a couple of them told me that it's purely their physical danger from these gangs--absolutely all--but then a couple of others told me, "You know, I really don't want to go to school." I find among the girls the big problem is the romantic interests that spring up. The biological problems that come up at the age when they're supposedly preparing to get further in their schooling--somehow we're going to have to meet that thing.

McCormick: How can we help these youngsters adjust to both what's happening to them physiologically and what's happening to them in a school-room situation? What could we do so that they will not feel, "I've got to drop out and marry the guy on the corner that I met out there in his car"? I'm not opposed to the early marriage. We have to change the attitudes for more learning.

One young girl told me the other day that she had gotten a job, and she had finished junior high school--went to the eleventh grade. She cannot read and write. You would not believe it; she cannot read and write. When I asked her what is her chief desire, she said, "To be able to read and write." Because why? She had three children and she wants to be able to help them so that they will get through school. But how did she keep a job? She got a job. She said, "I couldn't even write down a message. When somebody called in and I took the message, I had to remember it." And she said, "I had to train myself to remember to tell Mr. So-and-so that Mr. So-and-so called and to tell the other one that So-and-so called." She said, "I was going crazy with this," because she couldn't function. And yet she wanted that job desperately and held on to it as long as she could. In fact, she quit on a Friday evening, went home and had her baby Saturday. So she really was interested in it.

Chall: Help is needed in different areas than most of us realize.

McCormick: Well, I would say that six months of some formal schooling--I say formal schooling, but what I mean is in any way that you can arrange it in a home, in a church, or wherever you can do it--would do more, I think, than almost anything you could think of to really further advancement for women and their children.

Chall: Are you going to have any opportunity to express your point of view on the basis of what you're doing, or will you just hand back the tapes?

McCormick: Oh, no. I'm asked every day for it, and I certainly intend to summarize many of my experiences because some are so far outside the community college development. For instance, the fact that there are five young people who have dropped out of school at this age; I think that this is the most important thing that you have to deal with there. Or there are other places where they've actually gone and had the schooling but cannot read and write.

McCormick: One young girl said, "Oh, I don't have my glasses." Well, as soon as they say that, I know. She finally confided in me and said that although she had gone through junior high school, she cannot read and write. She said, "I don't want my husband to know it." Now, mind you...

Chall: She's really illiterate, not just functionally illiterate.

McCormick: She is illiterate. When I asked her why, she said, "Well, when I came there the girls laughed at me. And so I dropped out of school because I just couldn't be laughed at." And she also has two children to raise.

I couldn't tell you how many I have come across. I used to think when I ran across an illiterate person they were from the South or they were from some long-ago age when some people really didn't go to school. But these are the illiterates who come out of the school system.

Survey on Family Planning##

Chall: You talked to me about the fact that you're working with Planned Parenthood under a grant.

McCormick: Well, I'm not working with Planned Parenthood. No. I'm doing some work for the U.S. Department of Health which has to do with women of childbearing ages--the children they have had, and what they intend to do about a family in the future. I have to come to some shocking things in this regard.

First of all, I find that we need a whole group of women gynecologists who have much more sensitivity to women and their problems. Because I have run into women who have been so butchered, so terribly treated in this respect as women, I think we need a great many women gynecologists. We also need a corps of women, not only who are trained professional people, but who are people who can go out on a one-to-one basis to talk with women. The ignorance, the fears that exist in this area are just unimaginable.

For instance, I have talked with women who have been horribly butchered surgically.

Chall: Having children? Abortions?

McCormick:

No, by these so-called tubular ligations or other methods of permanent birth control. I'm not supposed to discuss this with them in some respects, but I always do because I have found out that you learn a great deal more by discussing it with them than you would if you just left it with a simple yes or no about birth control.

I find that some women--many women--are afraid of certain methods of birth control. When they go to the Planned Parenthood center, or they go to talk to a doctor and they tell him... I'm thinking of one young woman in particular who told me that the pill made her very ill. When she went back--and I asked, and she said yes, it was a woman doctor--they paid no attention to her whatsoever. So then she had her second baby and she went back again and they gave her the pill. Again, it made her very ill and she went back. They told her, "Quit being such a big baby. It's something that you'll have to get used to"--the side effects of the pill. Well, the result is that she's had the third baby. Then she found out from another young woman that there was such a thing as the IUD. So she went and asked for it. They did not want to give it to her.

Now, I presume that they have a control group that they're using so many on pills, and she may have been part of one of those; I don't know. But at any rate, the insensitivity to this woman's personal problems. So now she is saddled with three small babies. She did not want to have any more. Her husband objects to birth control, so she has gone out and done this against all the odds.

I think the lack of listening to some of these women is deplorable. Then some will tell me what happened with the IUD, and they were afraid to go back and discuss it because the doctors say, "Oh, you're complaining about something that there's no need to complain about." That's why I say there's got to be just a greater sensitivity about some of these things. Now, this little woman isn't going in and tell the doctor, "I came in here to get some birth control pills, and my husband doesn't know about it, and I don't dare tell him about it." She doesn't go into that. She's not going to. And the fact is that the doctor's going to give her five minutes maybe; so he isn't going to go into it either.

Another experience the other day. One woman I was talking with said that her house had been robbed. That night when she went to bed she went to get her diaphragm, and lo and behold, this was one of the things the burglars took. I said, "Let us hope they can use it." [laughter] But at any rate, here she

McCormick: is, and she says, "Now where can I get this?" She said, "I have to make an appointment. And how do I have to do it? I can't buy it in a drugstore. I have to go to the doctor; I have to pay eighteen dollars for a prescription to go and get another one. I don't have the eighteen dollars." She said, "I am forty-eight years old. I don't want to show up pregnant. And now my husband is angry with me. So what am I going to do?" She said, "Why can't these things [birth control clinics] be open at other hours, or why do I have to go to a doctor and get this prescription? Why can't we get it right away?" These are just the practical things that happen to women.

A lot of these things I want to wind up into a report. How much good it will do, I don't know, but they raise some very practical questions.

Chall: How are you finding the women? Are you just knocking on any door?

McCormick: No. A random selection by the computer has chucked out certain addresses that I go to. For instance, in one square block I saw seven women, and I would say that this thing of unnecessary hysterectomies is certainly a real fact too. You'd be surprised at the women who have accepted it.

Chall: Is that one way of taking care of birth control?

McCormick: Oh, yes. There are just all kinds of things that come up in discussing these things with these women.

I talked to one woman--I don't forget that one either because I didn't sleep that night. I came there. A man was lying on the bed, and I thought maybe he'd been drinking or something, but when I came in and I said I was from the health department, he got up and came over and looked at me. And I saw then that he was a young man completely wasted away, the whites of his eyes were purple in color, and he said, "Is there something you can do for me?" He's dying. I found out that he had been in the general hospital. They don't know what the trouble is. They think it's some tubercular problem. But at any rate, here's the wife with an eight-day-old baby and another small child. And she isn't using any birth control because of a religious thing. But I talked to her for half an hour and finally got her to agree that she ought to wait at least five years before she has another baby. That's the best I could get out of her. But someone has to go there and talk with this woman, and meanwhile the husband will either die probably or something will happen.

Chall: Do you talk to these women or others about this matter of birth control for young girls and married girls if you feel that one of the problems is this physiological development taking place at the same time their intellectual development should be fostered? How do you get around that?

McCormick: Most of them tell me they are opposed to young girls having this information. The younger women will say they are for having the information. Most of them will tell me, "Well, when I was sixteen I got an IUD," or "I began to take the pill." They will tell me that.

Of course, birth control is becoming so accepted. Five years ago I did a study for UCLA and the difference in the attitudes of women is very remarkable, because then it was much more difficult to talk to women. Not now. I was out in El Monte day before yesterday and not one single person refused to discuss the most intimate matters at all, which is a great difference over a few years ago and a very healthy one.

I do want to make known to people some of the things that I find. And most of women feel that men doctors and women doctors that they talked to are very insensitive, and they feel hesitant about saying anything to them, or they just feel that it's something they have to suffer through--they have to put up with it.

Chall: Are there any women's health collectives in the area?

McCormick: No, I don't know about that. They all speak highly of one of the clinics over there in East Los Angeles and El Monte, with the exception of two of them that told me these experiences of the doctors saying, "Oh, well, you have to learn to put up with this." What I'm talking about is not offering them alternatives, not discussing with them alternatives. A little class in physiology would be really good. But, of course, they don't have that time. I imagine that maybe the clinic does have some educational classes or things they invite women into, but perhaps they don't go. I'm going over to find out.

That's why I say if they're going to do anything, they're going to have a troop that goes around from door to door and visits women and talks with them. I don't find any hesitation on their part.

I took over from some young woman that was doing this, and she was refused a number of times, but I think it's because of her age. I think they're reluctant, but they're not afraid to talk to an old grandma [like me] because she's not their peer and she's not apt to compare their experiences with somebody else's, or anything of that kind; so they're a little more apt to talk freely.

McCormick: But there certainly needs to be some talking done, I'll tell you that.

Chall: You must be feeling as if you're putting your time to good use.

McCormick: Oh, yes, I'm very pleased to be doing what I'm doing. Only I sometimes feel very frustrated that there are no real answers to some of these things. For instance, I don't know the answer to: What do you do with five young people who dropped out of school; how actually to get them back in? I know that some of the problems they're raising are very real. I know--as some of them tell me--"If I study that and I get out, there's no job; I'm not going to get a job. We only do what we have to do."

Chall: Thank you very much for your time in doing this. It's been most interesting.

VI FILLING IN SOME DETAILS

[The following material was recorded by Mrs. McCormick, in her home, in order to answer questions about her work in the International Labor Defense and the Communist party which had not been fully covered during the interview in May, 1976. Repetition has been retained in order not to destroy the meaning of the accounts which are often discussed in broader context than they were during the initial interview.]

Executive Director of the International Labor Defense##

McCormick: In the latter part of 1936, I had gone to the ILD office, which I did frequently, and was talking with Rose Chernin, who at that time was the executive director, and she talked to me about assuming more responsibility in the district. She said that she was going to be leaving Los Angeles and would like to present my name to the ILD membership as a possible replacement for herself. I was pretty surprised at this, and I didn't feel that I could possibly take over in her place; I'd had no experience of that kind. The most experience I'd had had been in the branch and in the section leadership of the ILD, and I didn't think that that particularly had prepared me for such a position as she was suggesting. However, within a short time after that, I had several other discussions with her, and then, at the ILD meeting, the district council meeting, she raised this, and it was discussed there. Finally, there was a meeting called of the ILD membership. My name was put forward, and I was accepted and shortly thereafter assumed the position as the executive director.

I knew Lillian Goodman, who had been in the ILD office sometime before Rose Chernin had taken over, however I had not worked closely with her. My work had been in the branch, as I said, and in the section, and I did not know Lillian, except as the leader of the ILD.

McCormick: I never really knew many of the people in the ILD in the north [Northern California] except just to meet them, with the exception of Elaine Black [Yoneda]. Elaine had lived in Los Angeles and worked in the ILD here and then gone to San Francisco. After she was in San Francisco and I was in the Los Angeles office, we did work fairly close together. We corresponded continuously on various campaigns, and frequently were called upon to decide in which district the territory lay and who was going to handle a particular case. There were many strikes in the agricultural valleys, for example, in the northern valleys in Salinas and so forth, and it was generally understood that the northern office would handle that, and anything south of that would be in my area and I would be responsible for it.

You wanted to know about the relationship between the Communist party and the ILD. Well, of course, there was a very close relationship, because many of the people who were arrested were members of the Communist party, or associated with it closely because in those days, particularly in the Los Angeles area, we did not have a strong labor movement. Most of the militant activities or struggles that were carried on were carried on by communists. Particularly was this true of the unemployed movement, which was not initiated here by the trade union movement, but was carried on by the more militant communists and community organizations. So there was a very warm and close relationship.

Of course, I was a member of the Communist party by that time, so that I discussed frequently with them my own role in the ILD and also discussed many of the cases that we handled as to tactics to be used in conducting a defense, or a particular campaign. So there was a close relationship, I would say. There were other members of the Communist party in the ILD too. However, the majority of the membership were not communists; the membership was made up of close sympathizers to the issues of the day: struggles of the unemployed, the militant agricultural workers, the people who were working in the anti-fascist movement. These all made up the membership, as well as in the black community, the many people who were supporting the Scottsboro case and other issues that particularly affected the black people of that time.

At that time, black people could not go into most of the restaurants in Los Angeles, and indeed in many of the theaters they had to sit in certain sections. I remember in the Watts area, which was not far from where I lived, that black people had to go to the balcony if they wanted to come into the theater. At that time, if a black worker went to the town,

McCormick: say, of Glendale, or even of Huntington Park, or of Inglewood, and was even in the town after a certain time in the late afternoon, he was apt to be arrested and charged with vagrancy or any other charge that the powers that be might want to throw at him. We were often called upon to get someone out of difficulties because they were in the so-called "white" community and their presence there was resented.

The ILD and the Mexican Community

McCormick: There were also the very serious problems of the Mexican community, mainly the case of the people who were being shoved back across the border; people who had been brought into the country by the Southern Pacific and by the agricultural owners, who now had little use for them since the Depression was on. The relief authorities or the charity department very much wanted to get them off their rolls, so there were hundreds and hundreds of cases of deportations of which we probably saw only a fraction. In just going over some of my old notes, I see here that there were within a month's time--I think there were--at least thirty or forty people who came into the ILD office asking for help because they were ordered deported.

Now, these were families, most of whom had American-born children and who had been in the country for a long period of time. There was a ruling that if they had been here before 1923, even though they had come on a green card or on a work permit, they were really not deportable. But this made little difference to the immigration department, who simply loaded them into what we used to call the dogcatcher wagon. It was a truck or a vehicle with heavy wire screen, and they would simply go around to the houses and pick these people up, and within two hours or so, they were across the border and out of the way of having any redress or any day in court. So we had many of these cases to contend with.

I soon found that one of my responsibilities in the ILD office was preparing briefs and going before the immigration department on behalf of these people because there were few lawyers that were able to handle all of this.

I want to say that in the Los Angeles area, the chief director of the immigration department [the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service] was a Mr. Del Guercio, who was an ardent admirer of Mussolini. As a matter of fact, in his

McCormick: office he had a large autographed picture of Mussolini, and I think that'll give you an idea of the kind of person that he was. We found him to be so hard against the Mexican workers, and so rough on the people who were involved in any radical activity, that it was almost impossible to get fair hearings in that area. At this time, you know, Roosevelt was in office, and most of the organizations within the government had become at least liberalized to some extent. But the immigration department never was. And it remained--all the period of time that I had any knowledge or close working there, it remained a very reactionary anti-people setup.

In many areas, particularly in the agricultural areas, the bosses there felt that they could do anything they wanted to Mexican workers and get away with it. I remember one quite outrageous instance in the Oxnard area, where there was a sugar refinery. The people then living in Oxnard--the population--were in the main Mexican. They were the workers who worked in the fields and in the factory. The ILD had established, before I came into it, a branch of the workers there through some of the activities of the ILD in the area.

I was asked by the secretary of the ILD branch of Oxnard to come there and to show some pictures and to meet with the people of the area. So we did; this was a thing that we frequently did. We had pictures of the various strikes and pictures of the communities and things that were happening there that were made by a member of the ILD. So we used to go into those areas and show pictures and meet with our membership and try to enlarge the group and help make it a bigger one. So I went on this occasion. I had written to the secretary and announced that we would be there on a certain date. When we drove up there early on a Sunday morning, we found no one around at all. The town was as dead as it could be. There wasn't anyone on the main street; there wasn't anyone there to be seen. I could not raise anyone at the homes that I knew, the contacts that I had, to meet with. I couldn't understand it. Finally, someone did get to me and tell me that the sheriff had been around and told the workers that if they went to a meeting of the ILD, they would all be fired from their jobs and run out of town and deported. So the workers, who were terrorized by this, had decided not to have the meeting, and had sent only this one person to let me finally know what was happening. I asked them if they hadn't received my letters, and they said no, they had not.

In looking into this later, I discovered that the sheriff had been in the habit--or the chief of police; I've forgotten which one it was--they were in the habit of opening the mail

McCormick: that came to any of the Mexican people there and simply reading it, and deciding what they wanted to do about it, and doing it. They had opened any mail that came from the ILD. Well, of course, we took this up with the federal authorities and were finally able to put a stop to it. But this is just an example of the high-handed activities of the law-enforcement agencies in most of the communities.

When I came into the ILD office to work, I think the first thing that struck me was the fact that we were such a narrow organization for all of the work that was being carried out by the just dedicated people who were members of the ILD; that our size was in no way commensurate with the activities that we carried on. I thought a great deal about this, and felt that we really ought to enlarge our base by handling a lot of other kinds of material, a lot of other kinds of cases than we were able to at that time, in order to enlarge the organization, in order to attract many other kinds of people to it, because there were many people who would be incensed if they knew about violations of civil rights, but who weren't particularly interested in either the Scottsboro case or some of these other things because they hadn't heard of them before. I felt that if we were able to draw in people from other areas, particularly the native-born American worker who didn't yet know the things that were stacked against him, it would make a great deal of difference in how much we could accomplish in the organization.

I therefore set out to try and take in other kinds of cases than just strictly civil rights cases and cases growing out of the struggles of the day. For example, I began to pay some attention to people who came in with cases where they had been bilked by an insurance company, or they had been mistreated by real estate people. There was a great deal of that going on at that time, particularly among the Mexican workers. They would buy a piece of property, and then discover that the realtor had lied to them about it, or had in one way or another charged them more than the property was worth, and that they had been victimized many times because they simply didn't know the language. So I began to take up many of these kinds of cases, and I do believe that it did have an effect in drawing more people into the ILD work.

Did I have any responsibility in writing for the Labor Defender or any other editorial responsibilities on the Equal Justice magazine? No, I never wrote for any of these things. First of all, I'm not a writer and I have no particular talent for that, and never did, except the infrequent reports that I

McCormick: made to the membership on various cases or to the national office, and those were just factual materials, but were not what I would call writing for them.

The Red Squad and Police Corruption

McCormick: You asked about any experiences with "Red" [William F.] Hynes. My first experience with the Red Squad--and I had never heard of it before--was when I was asked early in my experiences back in the early thirties to come to a meeting that was being held at the corner of Forty-third and Santa Barbara, which was called a free speech zone and was where people just got up and spoke. Some people might be able to sell some pamphlets to people passing by. Usually a little crowd would gather, and this was one of the means of reaching people. So on this occasion--it was my first--I went with these people. I had been accustomed to talking from the floor in the Democratic party or in the co-op that I belonged to, but I had never seen a street meeting or didn't know anything about it.

So I went, and to my surprise, when I asked the people in charge, "Who's going to chair the meeting?" they said, "Well, you are." I had never done anything like that, but I rose to the occasion since the person that was supposed to be the chairman hadn't shown up. In a few moments, here came this squad which the people informed me was the Red Squad. They told us that we had to get out of there, that you couldn't speak there, and, of course, I continued and I berated the Red Squader as being un-American and everything else, trying to keep me from speaking to people. I was just highly indignant, because I thought I had every right to talk to people anywhere or do anything that was my right under the Bill of Rights. I wasn't about to be stopped. After the meeting was over, the people who had called it said that they thought that the Red Squad was not acquainted with me, that was the first time they'd ever seen me probably, and therefore hadn't actually tried to make any arrests. Well, that was my introduction to the Red Squad.

From then on, I met up with them, of course, at all kinds of picket lines; anyplace there was a strike, the Red Squad was there; or any kind of a demonstration, the Red Squad was there; or even public meetings at the city hall, or before the board of supervisors, the Red Squad would certainly be there.

McCormick: I saw "Red" Hynes frequently, because he used to frequent a bookie that was near the ILD office on First and Broadway, and I would pass him sometimes several times a day at that bookie establishment. He, of course, knew who I was. He was in the habit, since he posed as an authority on communism and claimed to study and read everything that the Reds were putting out, of going to the workers' bookshop on Spring Street, and he used to take any amount of literature that he wanted to keep up with his expertise as the ace Red hunter. During the criminal syndicalism trials in '34 in the Imperial Valley, he sat at the elbow of the prosecutor and interpreted Marx and Lenin for the enlightenment of the court and the jury. During the Kynette trial in Los Angeles, the police chemist testified that Hynes helped him out and helped out the Shaws many times.

The Shaws were the mayor [Frank L.] and his brother [Joseph E.], who were part of the corrupt apparatus in the city of Los Angeles. Of course, for several years, the campaign had been going on under the leadership of Clifford Clinton to clean up Los Angeles. As the director of the ILD, I used to go to the city hall every Tuesday morning, where people would come from all parts of Los Angeles, large numbers of people, and we would talk about all of the grievances we had with the city. The ILD had a particular grievance, and that was the miserable conditions in the local jail, where there were people who were serving as much as a year's sentence for having participated in an unemployed demonstration, and the food was so horrible, and the jail was such a terrible place and overcrowded, that we were continuously going before the various city and county groups--the supervisors and the city council--trying to get something done about conditions in the jail generally.

Of course, the question of police brutality was always present in Los Angeles, particularly directed against the militant people in the trade unions; but more than that, just ordinary people who found their way into the jail on drunk charges or any other kind of a charge might be beaten horribly, and several were actually killed in the confines of the Los Angeles city jail. When we would go before the police commissioner about these problems, we were always confronted by the fact that the only witnesses to mistreatment and brutality in the jails were other prisoners. And the police commission didn't want to take the word of anyone who was also in the jail for some misdemeanor. Of course, there were never any ministers or lawyers or real estate brokers or someone whose word the police commission might be willing to accept. The people who were in the jail generally were the poor and those who had transgressed in some way. So many of them had no friends or had no protection from the jail authorities.

McCormick: So the ILD was very, very concerned about this part of the corruption in the city of Los Angeles. So I was there every Tuesday, and I used to get on a box to speak; it was necessary to speak over the transom because the city officials would lock themselves in their office hoping to keep the people out. Things went on until, of course, 1938 saw the end of the Shaws, and the Red Squad was disbanded as a result of this, and there was a general cleanup of the jails. I had conferences several times with Mayor [Fletcher] Bowron and with his appointees, particularly Van Griffith, who was the liberal appointed to the police commission as a result of the recall campaign.

However, I don't want to say that everything was sweetness and light following that election, because it was not. It was not long before one of the cases that we had was that of a young man, a Mr. [Irving] Jordan, a young black man, who had given very valuable help to the recall committee. Jordan had given valuable assistance to the committee, because he was part of the vice situation in the Central Avenue area. He had taken pictures, which he gave to the recall committee, of the actual payoff between the vice ward down there and the mayor's brother, one of the Shaws. After this campaign was over, Mr. Jordan was going home from work one night late, and was picked up by the police around midnight. The police officers who picked him up did so really quite by accident, but in a few minutes they discovered who he was. They themselves had been a part of the corruption in the police department, and they were just overjoyed when they found that they had this young Jordan in custody.

They began to systematically build a frame-up against him. No one really knew for sure who had squealed to the recall committee, but they had by now decided that Jordan was a part of that. So they began a systematic frame-up against him. When I got a hold of the case, he had about ten or twelve charges of kidnaping, and of robbery, and assault with a deadly weapon. It really looked pretty bad for him.

I went immediately to Clinton of the recall committee and asked him to interest himself and he told me in no uncertain terms that he would not, because he felt that this young man had such a bad record and was such an unsavory character that he wanted nothing to do with it. I then went to a number of other people in the black community, none of whom would lift their finger for him because he was known for his background. I went to one black lawyer who subsequently was a judge on the bench in Los Angeles, and he told me that he wouldn't touch it because the man's record was so bad that he didn't think that the NAACP or any organization, including ours, ought to do anything about it.

McCormick: I finally prevailed upon Grover Johnson, who was working with the ILD, to handle it, even though he also felt that the young man was probably guilty of some of these things and he didn't want really to work on it either. It was only when we had gotten through the first part of the case, in which I had gone out and played detective and found out most of the salient parts of the frame-up and how it was put together, that we were able to shake the police. Grover later told me that while he was so convinced that the young man was guilty in the beginning, halfway through the trial he was certain that I was right about it.

We went ahead and we won that part of the trial, and then before the other part of the cases were to come up, I took a delegation to the district attorney and simply told him that if he went any further with this thing, they were going to have such a big mess on their hands that they would never forget about it. They readily agreed to withdraw all of the rest of the charges. The young man was freed.

I felt that police frame-ups, no matter where they were, or why they were going on, ought to be fought, and that the ILD was the proper organization to do it. I felt it was a great victory for the people of Los Angeles because the recall had not changed many things; it had changed some, but not everything. There was a long, long way to go before we could consider that the police department in Los Angeles was halfway cleaned up.

One of the things that did not take place after the recall was to make the police department responsible to some civilian board of review, and this is an issue that's still going on today. Every time we took cases up--and that was frequently--on police brutality or wrongful arrest, we were always confronted by the fact that the police department tried themselves. If an officer was charged with brutality against someone, he simply picked out some of his brother officers as a jury and told them his story, and, well, of course, you know that he was vindicated almost nine times out of--well, all of the time that I ever knew of. So we always were asking for a civilian group to hear the cases that the people had against the police department.

And to this very day now here in Los Angeles, this is again the big issue, in the black community particularly, where there was the killing of Mrs. Love a year ago, and have been several killings since. The police department simply waits a convenient

McCormick: length of time and issues a report vindicating their officers, and that's all that's heard of it. I think, however, that the time is just about ripe now when perhaps we can make more progress in that direction; at least there are all those indications that there will be.

You asked about the relationship with the ACLU. I worked very much of the time with the ACLU, with Dr. [Clinton] Taft, who was then the executive secretary in the Los Angeles area, and with A.L. Wirin, who was their chief counsel. And, of course, Leo Gallagher, and Grover Johnson, and some of the other lawyers who worked with the ILD also worked with the ACLU. We frequently had joint meetings where we discussed issues and certain cases, particularly around the anti-leaflet ordinance in Los Angeles. It was the ACLU and the ILD counsel who took this to the Supreme Court and finally won the right in Los Angeles to distribute leaflets.

There were times when we did not get along with the ACLU, and there was some hostility towards them. This was because the ACLU--their policy was to defend anyone on the question of civil rights. They would as willingly defend the Nazis or the Ku Klux Klan and their right to put out material as they would anyone else. The ILD, on the other hand, did not feel that we wanted to do anything about the defense of the right of Nazis to issue material, or the Ku Klux Klan, or other anti-democratic forces. We recognized that there was a class struggle and that we were on one side, and that the Nazis and other anti-democratic forces were on the other. So there was no time that we would entertain supporting a case strictly on the basis of their right to put out leaflets, which the ACLU did.

Of course, the ACLU had access to much more financial assistance, and probably was better known than the ILD was. The ILD had very little money to work on; mostly the work was done by devoted people who gave their time and also what little money they had to do the things that we did do. I sometimes am very surprised that we were able to do as much as we did with the little we had.

Infiltration of the Left-Wing Movement

McCormick: You asked about FBI infiltration in the ILD or other groups with which I was associated. Yes, we well knew that police agents and the FBI were always interested in what we were doing. We suspected that they would try any method to get

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November 6, 1937.

La Rue McCormick,
International Labor Defense,
127 S. Broadway,
Los Angeles, California.

Dear Mrs. McCormick:

Congratulations!

I received a telephone call today saying, "How are you, Comrade Wirin?" Since I am not in the habit of being so addressed--at least on the telephone--I suspected the speaker. It was Captain Hynes. He admitted his rendezvous with me on November 17th.

He offered to pay \$30. I rejected the offer.

Sincerely,

Thanks for
serving Hynes.

A. J. W.

ALW:MM

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McCormick: information and to place police agents who would help perpetrate frame-ups if they could in any of the left-wing organizations. I know that I had frequently found the FBI sitting in a car near my home and I knew that they were watching and that they had someone in the area that was gathering information for them. It always surprised me, in a way, except that I knew that it was a big apparatus that people made their living out of and a fat living at that, because they could have gotten any of the minutes of the meetings by asking for them. What we did was entirely open and was shouted to the rooftops if we could do it. There were no secret activities as such that were going on in any organization that I belonged to, that were illegal activities or something that would undermine any institutions in this country. On the other hand, our activities were designed to extend the rights of people and to make a better way of life for everyone.

I had very early in my activities in the left wing learned that what John C. Calhoun had once said, that it's harder to preserve than to obtain liberty, certainly was true in the United States. We might have liberty, but to guarantee that we were going to continue to have it was really a hard matter. Much of what we felt we had was not really in actuality, but was simply in our Bill of Rights and in the Constitution on paper. Certainly you couldn't consider that the blacks of the South had liberty, or that we had liberty when we couldn't even put out leaflets in Los Angeles. That was a hard-won fight to get the right to do that.

Of course, the FBI was also very active in the CP, and in any other people's organizations that existed. I can remember that it was in 1937, I believe, that the district organizer of the Communist party was found to be a police agent. One of my early recollections in the left-wing movement was apprehending a police spy. I tell you this story because it certainly opened my eyes; this was part of my whole learning process. When I came into the left-wing movement, I was a little out of place many times because many of the people were foreign born, and there were none of the young people that I had known or gone to school with that were participating at that moment--or at least I didn't know any of them that were in the left wing.

So one day I went to the old cultural center which was on Spring Street, where the headquarters of the Communist party and their bookshop, and dance studio, and drama school, and cafeteria, and library, and workers' school were all housed, and which was a very interesting place to go. When I walked in one day, sitting at the library table was a young man, and I was so happy to see him because I thought that he was George

McCormick: Hanson, who had been in high school with me, and who was the head of the ROTC there, and quite a popular young man. I walked up to him this day when I saw him at the library table, and said to him, "Oh, I'm so happy to see you! Do you remember me? We went to high school together." He looked me in the eye and said, "I'm sorry. You must mistake me for someone else." He said, "A number of people have thought I was someone else. I guess I must have a very common appearance." We sat and talked for a few minutes and he really convinced me that he was not the George Hanson that I had known in high school. I forgot about it. He was one of the teachers in the workers' school there, and invited me to come over and participate in the classes and was very cordial, very friendly, but he convinced me that he was not the George Hanson that I had known.

About a year after this, I had an occasion to talk to a woman who was brought to me because she was in such an emotional state because she had recently been arrested on a charge of shoplifting. She said that she just didn't know what to do, she was so embarrassed and sick about the whole thing; and that she had not done anything wrong, but she knew that if she went into court, which was set for a week or so from then--the time that I met her--she would no doubt be convicted. Then she began to tell me the circumstances of the arrest. She told me that she had gone shopping one afternoon in Los Angeles and had, in one of the department stores, met a woman that she had known about ten years earlier, and she was very happy to see her because it was an old friend. They walked along shopping together, and had stopped and had a cup of coffee, and renewed their old friendship. While they were in a ten-cent store, the woman went in to buy a few things, and as they went out the door, they were stopped by the store detective, who told them to come with him; they went back to his office.

The woman who was telling me her story said that her friend pushed her shopping bag aside and said that it was not hers, that it belonged to the woman who was talking to me. This woman said, "Why, that's not mine. It's your shopping bag." She said when the detective reached into it, it was filled with little trifles, little ten-cent items, and this woman said she wouldn't have even bought any of them, and she was just amazed. She insisted that they were not hers and that she had done nothing wrong. So the store detective simply said, "Well, you're both under arrest, and you will have to go with me to the police department," which they did. So the matter had been set for a trial, and meanwhile this lady was so upset and so shaken by the experience, she just didn't know what to do. Someone in her neighborhood, who knew her--she finally confided in her--and she told her to come and see me.

McCormick: I told her that it so happened that I knew the judge on the bench where the case was coming up, and while I had never had any occasion to have any cases before him, I did know from hearing him in the courtroom that he was an entirely fair man, and I felt that her best plan would be to just tell him the story as she had told it to me, because I was completely convinced of her innocence, and that her story was a true one. I felt that this judge would throw the thing out, that nothing would happen. She had had no arrests; she had never been arrested before.

She told me that the reason that she was very fearful of going into the court and was sure that she might be convicted of something was because she had gone to see her friend after the arrest and had pled with her to tell the truth about the shopping bag and the things that were in it, and the woman had refused. She had found out that the woman's son was a member of the police department who worked undercover, wore disguises and did secret work for the police department, and that his mother had been arrested a number of times previous to this for shoplifting. This woman was afraid that the son would use his influence again; that he would get his mother out of it, and that she would be left as the guilty person; she didn't know just what would happen.

I told her that I would go with her to the court and I did on the day that it came up. She said to me, "Oh, look. Here comes my friend Ann with her son now." When I looked up, coming in the door was none other than George Hanson, that I had met over at the workers' school, coming in with this woman on his arm. I got up and went over to him, and I said, "I suppose you're not George Hanson." He said, "I don't want to talk to you." So I knew then that he was a police agent.

I called the CP immediately and told them what I had learned. They at first didn't even want to believe it. I got this woman to get a picture of him and took it to them, and, of course, the whole story was out then. He had been a police agent from the time he was in high school, and he had also been active in the workers' school, had taught in the workers' school. Then we knew the answer to something that had puzzled us for a long time. At one time, a year or so before this, there had been a raid in the veterans' home, and they had seized all of the reading material that some of the veterans had, and a couple of them had been ousted as a result of that. That had happened just before I came into the ILD work. But we then learned that George Hanson had gone to work there supposedly as a chemist, at the veterans' administration. He was shifted around from one place to the other to carry on his work as an agent. We finally caught up with him.

McCormick: So I certainly knew that there were police agents at work all of the time and they might be found in one place or another. Of course, they particularly were active in the Communist party.

Social, Economic, and Political Movements in the 1930s

McCormick: You asked about the 1938 Olson campaign. I certainly did work in the Olson campaign; that is, in as much as I was able to do beyond my own candidacy, because I was at that time running for office too. However, in that year, I think the major part of my activities were against the anti-labor Proposition #1.* And I took great interest in this because I was active in the cotton strike in the San Joaquin Valley. I very early discovered that we probably were not going to be able to do too much about the cotton strike, which was really a strike of surplus labor anyway. They didn't call it King Cotton for nothing; it was very seldom that a cotton strike ever won. But we did learn that the people in that valley, many of them, had come to the valley and had been there for more than a year, which made them eligible to vote in the election. I therefore turned my attention--when I was working in one particular part of the valley, I turned my attention to talking to them about the need to take political action and for them to register to vote, because they could be the decisive balance of power there.

The sheriff in that area, Sheriff Champness, was a member of the Associated Farmers and was particularly vicious against the striking workers. Sheriff Champness was up for reelection.

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McCormick: We were able to defeat Sheriff Champness, and we were able to defeat Proposition 1. So we felt pretty good about the situation there at that moment.

*Proposition #1 was defeated. It provided for restrictions on picketing, forbade hot cargo and secondary boycott, and made unions liable for damages caused by members.

McCormick: It was particularly gratifying to see that out of the large numbers of unemployed workers, most of whom had never even heard of a union before, who were in the valley at that time, most of them from Oklahoma and Arkansas and other parts of the South, a great deal of leadership came forward. We were able to set up a defense committee; we were able to set up a committee that went around to the communities locally and in Los Angeles and in other places to get support for the strikers. And we were able to set up a committee that got out publicity. The strikers themselves staffed all of these committees. It was really a wonderful thing to see the development of people. I'm quite sure that most of the people that participated in that strike, or in that situation, never forgot some of the things that they learned and were able to go on and participate in the trade union movement or the progressive movement wherever they might be after that.

You asked about the Townsend Pension movement and the Ham and Eggs movement that were going on in the area during the thirties. I was never active in these, although I was completely sympathetic to their aims. However, I will have to admit that I thought that some of them were a little farfetched and not really too workable. But the Ham and Eggs, for example, met in the Mason Opera House, in the auditorium. My office was upstairs, so I frequently used to drop in to listen to them and to discuss things with various people in the movement. They were very cooperative and progressive in their own way, active in their own little bit, which was in the pension movement. We had a very friendly relationship with them.

That was also true of the Father Divine movement, which was large in Los Angeles at that time. I frequently spoke before their groups, always got a warm welcome from them, and most of the people there were very sympathetic to the things that we were doing.

The Spanish Civil War, of course, was also going on. Our own field secretary, Henry Eaton, joined the Washington Battalion of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and went to Spain and was killed there in August of 1938. The ILD was very fond of Henry Eaton, and he had done a lot of excellent work in the ILD ranks before he left for Spain. That gave us really a personal interest in the whole war. We were very busy raising money for ambulances for Spain. When this war ended, we then continued to raise money for the children and for the hospital in Mexico, where many of the refugees from Spain went after the war. One of our members, Mary Ostrow, who was a very devoted person to the campaigns around children, raised enough money--she was responsible for that part of the campaign--and almost single-handedly, for a wing on the hospital in Mexico. When I was

McCormick: there some years later, I visited the hospital and visited some of the Spanish refugees, and saw the plaque that they had in the hospital there. They knew fully the role of the ILD during the civil war and the support that we had given, and I had a very warm meeting with some of the people in that area.

One of the men who had gone to the Spanish Civil War was Manuel Valenzuela, who was Mexican, and who had gone from Mexico to the battalion. After Henry was killed--he knew him well; he met him in Spain and knew him well. When the war was over, Manuel came back to Los Angeles and worked for the ILD for a long period of time as a field secretary, became very proficient in English, and did a lot of excellent work among the Mexican-American people in Los Angeles.

The last time I saw Manuel was in Mexico. His son, who was at that time going to the university, had decided that he wanted to go to the Cuban revolution. Manuel was very unhappy about this, although I reminded him that he had gone to Spain in 1938 himself. The final thing was that Manuel and his son both went to Cuba. Unfortunately, Manuel was killed there in a bus accident. He was a very fine human being, and devoted to the struggles of the people even though he himself was a fairly well-off businessman when he left to go to the Cuban revolution.

During the civil war we, and I, spent most of my time speaking to organizations with whom I had contact--trade unions, people's organizations, women's groups--and tried to present the Spanish Republic's side of the war. You may remember that our own government blockaded the Spanish and did nothing to help the Spanish Republicans at all, even though many, many progressive people in the United States had appealed to them to save the Spanish Republic and saw it as a prelude to another war, a world war, and a strengthening of the fascists.

It's difficult for me to think back now to that period, but I do remember that we were very, very much involved in it, and completely supportive. We cooperated with the Spanish-American committee that had been set up, and was working to aid the boys who returned from Spain and to continue help for the refugees, and continued politically to raise the questions that were, of course, raised by the Spanish Civil War.

You asked about my attitude toward the Soviet Union when they marched into Finland in 1939. I certainly didn't blame the Soviet Union for trying to knock the Mannerheim Line out. It was obvious, I think, to the whole world that the capitalist world had been intent since the very birth of the Soviet Union

McCormick: to strangle that baby in its cradle. They had had an army of intervention in there: the American forces under General Graves had been in Siberia, and other armies of all the other capitalist powers were on Russian territory trying to smash any rise of the Soviets at all. In Finland, under Mannerheim, they had destroyed the socialist government that had been set up by the Finns. So when the Soviets destroyed the Mannerheim Line, it probably decided the course of World War II; because had the fascists been strong enough to attack Leningrad from Finland in the beginning of the war, the outcome might have been far different for the entire world.

You asked about the Soviet-German pact. Here again, I felt and still to this day feel that the Soviets were trying to protect themselves and the only reason that the pact was made with Germany was to try to stem the attack of Nazi Germany against them. Of course, it didn't turn out that way eventually, but it was only an attempt when the Soviet Union saw that they were completely at that time surrounded by capitalist powers who were not friends of theirs by any manner of means.

The Smith Act

McCormick: The ILD nationally, and here in Los Angeles too, carried on a campaign against the Smith Act and against the registration and fingerprinting of aliens.* For a long, long time, the work in the ILD office in Los Angeles was, I would say, at least a third connected with cases of the foreign born, many of whom were now citizens and so forth, who were continuously harassed by the immigration office--particularly among the Mexican people. Some of these were actual political cases; many of them were not, of course; they were just simply an attack on the Mexican people. But a number of them were political in nature. I do not now remember the number that we defended, but in the earlier time,

*Alien Registration Act, 1940, made it a crime to overthrow the U.S. government or to belong knowingly to a group advocating it. U.S. Supreme Court decisions in 1951, 1957, and 1961 followed with various rulings affecting the Communist party and its members.

McCormick: before the Smith Act, there had been numbers of people who had to accept voluntary departure, or who were actually sent out of the country, who were deported because they were either members of the Communist party or were active in anti-fascist campaigns.

I remember one very, very dear man from England who was sent back, and I can never, never forget the picture as we stood in the depot, and the train with the bars on the windows pulled out, carrying him away from us forever. He had been a very devoted and responsible person whose whole life had been participating in all progressive activities. But he was deported. As I say, I'll never forget the sorrow and the anger that I felt when he left. The only consolation was that we heard from him from time to time in England, and I know that wherever he might be, he was carrying on anti-fascist activities.

In 1942, when the Japanese were relocated, or sent to the camps, from the Los Angeles and West Coast area, most of us were pretty upset by the fact that some of these people, many of whom were very devoted to the left-wing causes and movement, were leaving us. But I think we felt that they were in a dangerous place, and that there were among the Japanese--and I know that as a matter of personal knowledge--that there were among the Japanese certain elements who were very much attached to the Japanese government and to their position on the war. We felt that it was altogether reasonable, the Japanese being relocated. Our position was similar to that of the American Committee for the Protection of Foreign Born, with whom we had very close contacts. This position was that we felt that the Japanese who were in camps should be released if they were able to get jobs or were going into the armed forces or would be away from the coastal area. That was the position that we maintained.

We were wrong; it was one of the biggest mistakes that we made next to that one of not defending the original Smith Act victims, the Trotskyists of Minnesota.

The Issues Motivating Candidate LaRue McCormick, 1938-1947

For Congress, 1938

McCormick: You asked something about the political campaigns in which I personally participated. I was always a very politically minded person, and in anything that was going on anywhere that I was active at all, I participated in politics to some degree

McCormick: or another. In 1938, I became the candidate of the Communist party in the Sixteenth Congressional District, where the incumbent was Leland Ford, a man who had been on the board of supervisors in Los Angeles.

I had gone before the board of supervisors, because, remember, 1938 was still a Depression year, and the ILD was representing the unemployed in many instances. I often went to the board of supervisors with them on cases that involved getting relief or cases that involved the taking away of the rights of the unemployed in one way or another. Leland Ford was one of the most vitriolic, outspoken reactionaries--public officials--that we had at that time. I can remember one time that they apologized to me because Leland Ford stuck out his tongue and made an obscene gesture when he saw me in the supervisors' room preparing to speak in behalf of the unemployed. This was at a time when they were trying to disenfranchise some of the unemployed and there were very many struggles taking place at that moment to curtail wages and to stop trade union activity. Leland Ford was sort of the darling of the Los Angeles Times, of the open shop, and represented all of those things that we, the ordinary people, were against.

So I was very happy to become the candidate of the Communist party, and to oppose Leland Ford. He represented the Sixteenth District, which was a silk-stocking district. It at that time took in, I think, parts of Beverly Hills and the Santa Monica area, and other parts where the more affluent people lived. However, at that time, Douglas Aircraft, for example, was carrying on a campaign against the organizations in the aircraft industry. The motion picture industry, also, had laid off thousands of workers. The fight against the New Deal was being carried on very aggressively by big industry. MGM, for instance, had declared a thirty-million-dollar dividend, and at the very same time they were laying off hundreds of workers.

The progressive people, and the Communist party certainly in the leadership of much of that, were demanding that legislation be passed to give the people more of a break in the situation that developed in 1938. Now, at that time, it was possible for reactionary politicians to declare themselves in both the Republican and the Democratic parties, and in the primary secure the nomination on both tickets. Then they were away free, unopposed, to carry on their reactionary policies.

In 1938--I saw that I had made some notes here about the kind of program that the Communist party ought to have. I felt very keenly that we ought to run candidates in the areas where the

McCormick: reactionaries were most apt to get both nominations, and thereby at least leave someone to raise the issues in the final days of the campaign--not letting them just simply walk away with the whole election without ever meeting up with any of the issues; more than that, with no one to carry the issues, and the appeal to the ordinary people who needed to know that legislation was so important and needed to be passed nationally in the interest of all the people.

At this time, the anti-lynching bills had been introduced into Congress, and the filibustering was going on by the reactionaries of not only the South, but of other parts of the country, in the Senate, because the southern reactionaries controlled, really, Congress at that particular time. And they continuously fought the people. The 1936 program of the Democratic party was a very liberal one; but by 1938 it was obvious that many of the planks in the platform--the wage and hour bill and other things--were just simply not going to be passed or nothing was going to be done for them that would help the common people; that those same economic royalists who were controlling Congress were going to continue to do so if they could. So it was essential in 1938 that the issues of that day--the jobs issue, all of the reforms promised by the Democratic party--be again brought out to the people and they be fought for.

I was particularly interested in the state of the unemployed, and particularly the unemployed children, many of whose families had been forced into the agricultural fields, and indeed even the state relief setup was forcing them out into the agricultural fields by denying relief unless they went. There was no schooling at all for these children. The farmers in the areas where they had gone to work did not want them; there were no provisions made either for housing or for education at all. It meant that we were going to have a whole generation of children who had no opportunity to advance whatsoever.

The other problem that concerned me was the very direct drive to disenfranchise the unemployed. This began with the placing of single men in camps, and then a county council saying that because they had no other home, that the camps could not be considered a regular residence, and they therefore had no place from which to vote. The terrible consequence of this would probably be that getting away with disenfranchising the unemployed, they would then move in on those who didn't own property, and the first thing you know we'd be back to fight the Bill of Rights all over again, from the very beginning of our country.

McCormick: 1938 altogether was quite a hectic year for me and for the ILD, because I made one trip to Yuma and to Phoenix during the strike of the agricultural workers there and was instrumental in getting rid of the head of the relief in the Yuma area who was sending scabs to the fields, which was contrary to the law of Arizona. This was during the time when the Los Angeles Police Department was trying to keep people from coming from Arizona into Los Angeles, and [we had] the famous border police by the city of Los Angeles. There were many high-handed things that were being done completely illegally, so that we were running from one brush fire to another, trying to put them out. The situation in the whole country was one that required so many things to be done, that it was sort of like trying to clean the Augean stables--as fast as you accomplished one little task, or started on it, another one was ready someplace else. Between the many strikes, and the many civil rights violations that I went to investigate, and the personal problems of workers who came into the ILD office, '38 was a pretty poor year.

It was also a year when there were many, many more deportation cases of Mexican workers, and of other political cases: aliens who were charged with believing in an organization or in some philosophy that advocated the overthrow of the government.

Actually, in my entire experience, throughout my lifetime, I've never really met anyone, outside of one or two crazy individuals, or people that I thought were crazy, who ever advocated or believed that anyone could forcibly overthrow anything. Those one or two people had no means of doing it. So the whole question of overthrowing a government was so senseless. It was really just an excuse for the ruling class to attack the organization of working people, whether it be for trade unions or for any other reforms that were needed. It was the kind of thing that they might be able to arouse other people to put down such organization. That's about all it amounted to.

Except, of course, that there was built up a big machinery and business in Red-baiting. I remember one time when they were trying to keep me from the ballot--the Communist party from the ballot. The man who served papers on me at midnight requiring that I be at Imperial Valley the next morning before noon--when I asked him why he hadn't served these on me at my office, or hadn't served me much earlier, since I couldn't possibly physically comply with the demand, he stated that he'd been looking for me for over ten days. Now, I was in my office and right here at home every day, and there was no reason why they couldn't have served me. But I saw at once that the big expense accounts that they were able to run with this Red-baiting were at least another part of the whole anti-Red thing.

McCormick: 1939 and 1940, of course, began with many more cases for the ILD, because at this time the phony war was going on in Europe--the stalling around, trying to get the United States involved in a war. There had begun to be the outline of a peace movement in the United States, namely the American Peace Mobilization, with which the ILD cooperated completely. As a result of the organization against war, there were a number of leaflet cases. I was in Arizona on one of these involving the Jehovah's Witnesses, who, being anti-war, were picked up in outlying areas and subjected to terrible things by local authorities. I was unable, by the way, to get Jehovah's Witnesses to join in any kind of political activity, although in Arizona, conceivably, there could have been a change in the sheriff in some areas and other things as a result of carrying on a campaign in defense of the people who had been arrested in a political manner. They were unwilling to do this, because they said everything was going to be done by Jehovah, and they were absolutely opposed to any political activities.

Here in Los Angeles, we had finally gotten an injunction against the anti-leaflet ordinance being enforced. In the large cities, there was not so much of this happening. But by 1940, the United States Department of Justice had called a conference where they had included the attorneys general and all of the law enforcement people from all of the states, and they were proposing legislation against sabotage and, against criminal conspiracy, and all sorts of things. Really, we saw it aimed at a curtailment of civil liberty, because the terms of some of the measures were so vague that they prescribed fines and imprisonment for people who delay or hinder or interfere with any defense preparations. Conceivably, under most of them, trade union people could be arrested for simply carrying out the office of organizing workers. That might be called hindering defense activities.

They were extremely dangerous measures, and many of the states, individually, began to pass legislation of the same kind, like our own Criminal Syndicalism Law. Although there were existing criminal laws in all states that were adequate to punish any of the crimes that they had said were such a great danger to the country, they wanted these additional things, including a home guard to take the place of the National Guard. One of these measures was introduced by Jerry Voorhis of California.

Then, of course, there were their anti-alien bills that were designed to frighten the foreign born and to actually deport anyone who might fall within the provisions of any of the voluminous kinds of legislation that they were proposing all over the country.

McCormick: We saw this as a real attack on the rights of the people, and we began to organize conferences everywhere. Here in Los Angeles, we cooperated very closely with the Peace Mobilization and with all other groups, and tried to alert all of the trade unions to the danger in this proposed legislation. So we were busy with a great deal of this kind of work.

We had established meanwhile a legislative department in the ILD office, headed by Beulah Learned, who did an outstanding job preparing a bulletin and setting up a speakers' bureau and contacting organizations and so forth. As the drive toward war continued, and the resistance to it also grew, this became the major part of ILD work.

Along with the preparation towards war that was going on throughout the country, there were also the accompanying hysteria and riots against certain people that usually accompany war situations. In Los Angeles, we had the beginnings of the drive against the Mexican-American youth. I do want to tell you a little bit about that.

But first--in June, when Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, and the whole character of that war became one of democracy versus fascism, the ILD, along with all progressive organizations, came to the aid of the country and to the aid of the people, and we geared everything to the war effort. In line with this, the ILD offices were closed throughout the country, and by March of 1942, all offices had been closed. While there were still committees existing, they no longer had an office or were doing the kind of work that we had been doing formerly.

Our national office had tried to get attorneys or people that could work without any cost whatsoever--as a matter of fact, they allocated ten dollars a month as the top amount that they would allow for postage and other expenses--to carry on what work there was for the ILD. Everything was now being geared to the war effort, and it was felt that the ILD work that was necessary to be done was mainly in the legislative field and that this could be carried on by a volunteer committee or by individuals in the various areas.

For State Senate, 1942

McCormick: I next ran for the office of state senator against Jack Tenney on the Communist party ticket. This was because Tenney had become the ace Red-baiter in the state, and he was also

McCormick: registered as a Democrat and a Republican so that he would get both nominations and have no opposition and sail into the state senate. He was endorsed, of course, by the Los Angeles Times and all kinds of reactionary organizations who were very delighted to have him as their representative in Sacramento. Tenney was a member of the musicians' union and he had begun already to take a completely anti-labor stand in legislation in Sacramento, and was despised by the trade union movement and all liberals because of his Red-baiting tactics.

We set up a campaign committee and I began to vigorously campaign as did all members of the liberal wing in the trade unions. I got the endorsement of the radio machine workers' union; the furniture workers; upholsterers; the die casters; the mine, mill, and smelter workers'; the fishermen's union; and the warehousemen's union; and the International Workers Order; and a number of prominent individuals. Among them were Dalton Trumbo; Viola Brothers Shore; Lester Cole; Henry Meyers, the playwright; and Jay Gurney; and Paul Jericho; and other people who despised Jack Tenney's activities and who wanted to see at least some opposition, someone that they could vote for who had a liberal program.

I was at that time still active, particularly, in taking up the cudgels for the Mexican people. I had been named by the Spanish Speaking People's Congress, with whom I had very close relationships, as part of an investigating committee. I was also carrying on the activities in the Committee for Protection of Mexican-American Youth. The Sleepy Lagoon case, of course, was going on. All in all, there was a very strong campaign that was waged against Tenney, and a very aggressive attempt to involve as many people as possible around the campaign against him.

There was also on the ballot that year the infamous Proposition #1, supposedly to prohibit hot cargo and secondary boy-cotting during the war, but actually it was an anti-labor measure completely and an attempt to gag workers' rights to speak out and to build the union.

Of course, at the same time that this was going on, I noted in the papers that Negro troops overseas who were commanded by white officers were receiving praise in the papers for their activities, but here at home and even there on the front, the Negro troops were very much discriminated against. There were numerous cases of young black men who went into the service, who immediately came up against the old Jim Crow situation with white

CALIFORNIA NEEDS WIN-THE-WAR POLICIES

Strengthen the State Guard. Increase appropriations to meet minimum military standards.

Establish War Labor Advisory Committee. Place labor representatives in all war agencies. Repeal the Hot Cargo Law.

Repeal the Sales Tax and Retain the Income Tax. Defeat the State Income Tax repeal measure.

Establish a Negro Victory Board. Break down the bars against full participation of the Negro people in the war effort. Put Negro representatives on all government war boards.

Make the State Council of Defense Function. Strengthen civilian defense preparations. Organize a state-wide scrap-salvage drive.

Organize Farmer-Labor Cooperation. Form a Labor Pool to meet the farm-labor shortage. Speed the Food-for-Victory Program.

Smash the Fifth Column. Curb the subversive elements who aid the enemy.

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**ELECT WIN-THE-WAR CANDIDATES
TO EVERY OFFICE**

•
•
COMMUNIST TICKET:

ANITA WHITNEY
For State Controller

KENNETH MAY
For State Treasurer

PETTIS PERRY
For Secretary of State

PHILIP GARDNER
For Congress 15th District

LA RUE MC CORMICK
For State Senator

Issued by -
COMMUNIST ELECTION CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE
Room 501, 124 W. 6th St., Los Angeles

ROUT THE DEFEATISTS! ELECT WIN-THE-WAR CANDIDATES!



**ELECT
La Rue
McCORMICK**

**STATE SENATOR
FROM LOS ANGELES COUNTY**



**SPEAK OUT FOR
VICTORY
NOW AND NOV. 3RD**

ELECT LA RUE McCORMICK

DAUGHTER OF AMERICAN LIBERTY

Today the fate of America and civilization hangs in balance. In these wartime elections, all candidates must now meet the test. Are they worthy to lead a free people in their fight for independence and liberty against Hitler slavery?

At the service of her country La Rue McCormick actively supports the Win-the-War policies worked out by our Commander-in-Chief, President Roosevelt:

- The American-British-Soviet Alliance and Unity of the United Nations
- A Second Front against Hitler in 1942
- Unity against all Appeasers and Defeatists
- All-Out Production to Smash the Axis
- The 7-point Economic Program for All-Out War and Victory

Mrs. McCormick bears the traditions of American Liberty. Her forefathers, from earliest colonial days, pioneered against great

FIGHTER AGAINST HITLERISM

A resident of Los Angeles since 1910, she graduated from Jefferson High School, married, and now has two children.

As one of the first fighters against fascism, she campaigned for medical aid to Loyalist Spain. In 1933-34 she was Secretary of the Florence Epic Club. She has been Secretary of the International Labor Defense since 1935.

Trade unionists know her work for Tom Mooney's freedom.

Farmers and farm workers know her years of defending their living standards.

The Negro people know her defense of the Scottsboro Boys.

The Mexican people know her as champion of the Spanish-Speaking People's Congress.

All of Los Angeles County knows her championing of all people's causes.

The first woman State Senator in California should come from progressive Los Angeles. La Rue McCormick's record proves her worthiness for election. She pledges to fight for full

Free elections in California are at stake! Shall the State Senatorship from Los Angeles be awarded by default? This is a challenge to every citizen. Less than one-third of the Republican voters and one-quarter of the Democrats cast their ballot for Jack Tenney in the primaries. The majority voted against him! "Little Dies" Tenney is the California kin of Martin Dies who obstructs the war program in Congress and of whom Vice-President Wallace said: "He should be on Hitler's payroll." The Tenney Law against free elections was ruled unconstitutional by our Supreme Court. Tenney's red-baiting activities encourage Fifth Column attacks upon labor and other champions of national unity for victory. In this he blazed the reactionary path for Earl Warren and Wallace Ware. Red-baiting is Hitler's secret weapon to divide and conquer. Los Angeles has a progressive tradition to uphold. Its Senators have been men like Culbert L. Olson and Robert Kenney. Keep the people's voice from Los Angeles County alive in the Senate! ELECT LA RUE McCORMICK STATE SENATOR!

odds for a free nation. Grandfather William Manby was the first Lincoln Republican in Kentucky and an active fighter against slavery. Her parents were among the pioneers who opened up the West. Her early youth and training were imbued with the hardy spirit of democratic trail-blazing, establishing the qualities of leadership which she has brought to her public work throughout her mature years.

mobilization of woman power for victory—through an industry training program and government-sponsored nursery schools.

The only VICTORY candidate against "Little Dies" Jack Tenney, Mrs. McCormick offers the people a chance to express all-party unity of the win-the-war forces. A vote for La Rue McCormick is a vote for victory policies.

For Victory- BUY UNITED STATES WAR BONDS AND STAMPS

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WE ENDORSE THE FOLLOWING CANDIDATES FOR
ELECTION ON NOVEMBER 3rd, 1942

State

GOVERNOR - - - - - CULBERT L. OLSON
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR - - - - - ELLIS E. PATTERSON
SECRETARY OF STATE - - - - - PAUL PEERK
ATTORNEY GENERAL - - - - - ROBERT W. KENNY
STATE SENATOR - - - - - LARUE McCORMICK

Congress

15TH DISTRICT - - - - - CECIL R. KING

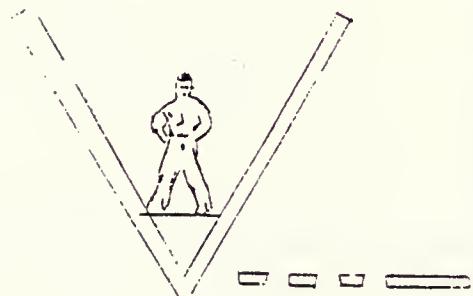
Assembly

56TH - - - - - VINCENT THOMAS

VOTE NO ON:

PROPOSITION NO. 1 - - - HOT CARGO

PROPOSITION NO. 4 - - - REMOVING THE TAX FROM THOSE
ABLE TO PAY, AS IT AFFECTS
ONLY 5% OF THE LARGE INCOMES
OF THE STATE. IF REPEALED,
IT WOULD PASS THE BURDEN OF
TAXATION ON TO YOU, WHO ARE
LEAST ABLE TO PAY FOR IT.



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'Boy Gangs Caused By Fifth Column' La Rue McCormick Cites Parallel To Influence of Hitler Methods;

'It's Whole Community's Problem'

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 1.—Addressing herself to "the mothers and fathers of Los Angeles," Mrs. La Rue McCormick, candidate for state senator from Los Angeles county, warned that a fifth column movement is at work "to corrupt and brutalize a large section of our youth, as Hitler did in Germany," in her latest radio address over KFWB.

Commenting on the recent wholesale arrests of Mexican youths on felony charges, Mrs. McCormick declared that juvenile delinquency is not peculiar to, or the exclusive property of the Mexican population of Los Angeles.

"Art. Juvenile delinquency is not a Mexican, but a community problem—common to every low-income group," she asserted. "In fact, Los Angeles has urgent need to meet this problem with a program of social priorities for all youth, particularly of a constructive character supplementing the war effort."

Mrs. McCormick, as regional director of the International Labor Defense, has worked among the Mexican people for years, having which she brought their problems to the attention of the Mexican government.

REASON FOR OUTBREAKS

Having established the fact that delinquency is not peculiar to Mexican youth, Mrs. McCormick then posed the question why there have been violent outbreaks in the Mexican community.

"The answer could only be that some organized body was exploiting the initiatives against Mexican youth to provoke them against America," she answered.

"This is borne out by reports that Mexican boys were beating up air raid wardens in the Palos Verdes community. Where have we heard of such things before? This has a familiar ring, because it repeats the history of Germany before 1933.

"Hitler, financed by the biggest money interests, captured the German youth who were without jobs and hope. He taught them hatred for their own people and organized them into bands that committed physical acts of violence. Today this brutalized generation of storm trooper youth shocks the whole world with wholesale atrocities against women and children in countries they overrun."

BACK LA RUE MCCORMICK

All units of the Wertheimer Union have endorsed the candidacy of La Rue McCormick for the state senate.

"We are determined to do everything we can toward the defeat of that union," rendered, Jack Tenny, "said Bert Garcia, press agent of the union.

The Furniture Workers were likewise canvassing the workers in the shops, mailing material to their membership with the CIO endorsements and recommendations on the propositions. The CIO is stressing the necessity for retaining Propositions No. 1 and No. 4. Proposition No. 1 is the hot cargo measure which would open their stores to fascism at home. Proposition No. 4 is an attempt to do away with a saving income tax and saddle the government people with a greater burden.

The Furniture Workers' candidate in their uniting a last-minute character that the executive board and department meetings of Local 600 have voted to endorse the candidacy of Mrs. La Rue McCormick after consideration of her program and platform.

"A vote for Mrs. McCormick," the statement added, "is a vote against the reactionary policies represented by Jack Tenny and his cohorts."

An example of some of the election work being carried on in the AFL was furnished by Local 882, Laboratory Technicians (ATSD). This union has just mailed 20,000 bundles of material containing facts about the win-the-war slate.

Over the weekend its members engaged in precinct work and large distribution of Democratic Party platforms to the downtown district.

People's World, 1942

McCormick: southern officers. The stories that some of them told me were really very terrible. Not just a question of the democratic rights of the blacks being infringed upon, but the whole war effort being held back by the Jim Crow in the army and the navy and other parts of the service. So, there were a number of these kinds of cases, from time to time, I was involved with.

I continued to campaign until the month of November, at which time the political campaign, of course, was over. I continued to work from my own home on the various cases that were still problems of the old ILD. I remember the one case of a young officer Terry, a young black who came from my own community and whose mother appealed to me. We set up a committee, and we were victorious in that particular case and the case of several other young blacks who had run into the Jim Crow situation in the armed forces.

These kinds of struggles were going on all the time, individual ones that no one ever heard of that were taken up by the blacks wherever they were and were solved by their own organizational efforts; some of them not too successfully, because they were either shipped out or put into groups of men that were considered troublemakers, and sent to various parts of the war theater where it was supposed that they wouldn't be heard of anymore.

For Los Angeles Board of Education, 1943, 1947

McCormick: I again ran for office in 1943, which was for the board of education in the Los Angeles district. Here, of course, it was on a program to win the war, and against a very reactionary woman, Mrs. Rounsevelle, who had been on the board for a long time in Los Angeles. One of the main planks in my platform at that time was to arrange child care for the children of women who were going into industries as a result of the war. Mrs. Rounsevelle, who was a very active PTA leader, always maintained that if there were child care centers for children, the mothers would be off to bars, drinking or something, and would not be caring for their own children. And, of course, this represented such a backward concept of what had to be done in the face of the tremendous numbers of women who were having to leave their homes whether they liked it or not and go into industry. Many of them had never worked before, and were now being absorbed into shipyards and aircraft and other industries.



Mrs. La Rue McCormick

VOTE APRIL 6
FOR GREATER
WAR SERVICE
By and For
OUR
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LA
RUE

ELECT
McCORMICK
TO THE LOS ANGELES
BOARD OF EDUCATION

TUNE IN EVERY THURSDAY NIGHT

9:00 P.M. -- KMTR -- Top of the Dial

(ALSO MONDAY, APRIL 5)

ISSUED BY LA RUE MC CORMICK CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE, ROOM 503, 124 W. 6TH ST., LOS ANGELES — TRINITY 7913

Mercury Printing Co. 155 No. Western Ave.

Copy of Political Ad

L.A. Gives Mandate For Win-War Policies

Citizens Choose New Men

Hampton Forced Into Run-Off With Healy

LOS ANGELES, April 7.—In a record light vote results of which were announced today, the voters here expressed a trend for national unity, and for a constructive approach in city affairs, as against the obstructionist tactics of the anti-administration forces.

About one-fourth of the registered voters cast ballots yesterday.

Their attitude is shown by election of six councilmen who are administration supporters, as against four obstructionists. New councilmen are: Lloyd G. Davies,

McCORMICK ON AIR TONIGHT

La Rue McCormick will analyze the election results over radio station KMTR, Thursday, April 8, at 9 p.m.

second district; John C. Holland, 14th district; and George H. Moore, backed by labor in the 15th district.

Two councilmen with the worst records were definitely defeated: They are Thresher in the 14th district and Hartney in the 15th.

Of three other councilmen with bad records in office, Roy Hampton, in the 13th faces a runoff against Ned E. Healy, the pro-war candidate.

In the sixth district, Earl Gay faces a strong threat from L. E. Timberlake, the candidate endorsed by labor.

In the ninth district, Pacley Parker Christensen, pro-administration incumbent, faces Allen in the run-off election. However, Allen has campaigned on a unity and pro-war program.

McCORMICK GAINS

There is every prospect that the final election on May 4 will result in a working majority for the administration.

In the board of education contest, three of the four incumbents were returned to office. Fay Allen faces a run-off election against Mrs. Adams.

Mrs. La Rue McCormick, prominent progressive got 15,323 votes, or better than 10 per cent of the total ballots cast. This doubled her percentage over state election results last November.

All incumbent municipal judges were returned to office.

Here are the semi-official returns from yesterday's primary councilmanic election:

District No. 1, complete: Delph 219, Dentzel 725, Gettys 1532, McCloskey (Inc.) 6324, Scherer 248, West 622.

District No. 2, complete: Cuthbertson 885, Davies 6213, Gordon 1580, Nelson 678, Taylor 322, Wright 928.

District No. 3, complete: Austin (Inc.) 7587, Parker (write in) 573, District No. 4, 202 precincts out of 205: Burns (Inc.) 10,141, Gunn 923.

District No. 5, 185 precincts out of 188: Briggs 2334, MacDonough 3342, McDonald (Inc.) 6771.

District No. 6, complete: Gay (Inc.) 5783, McFarland 552, McGahan 227, Timberlake 4136.

District No. 7, complete: Codins 294, Rasmussen (Inc.) 7226.

District No. 8, 191 precincts out of 193: Allen (Inc.) 6825, unopposed.

District No. 9, complete: Allen 378, Campbell 1727, Christensen (Inc.) 5990, Forbes 1113.

District No. 10, 180 precincts out of 182: Barnard 1573, Bennett (Inc.) 5510, Kilpatrick 3718.

District No. 11, complete full term: Blake 2125, Harby 4020, Lindstrom 455, Stannard (Inc.) 3998.

District No. 12, unexpired term, complete: Harby 4420; Stannard (Inc.) 5098.

District No. 12, 204 precincts out of 106: Baumgartner (Inc.) 8061, Gill 1322, Gore 523, Kuhner 636, Tierney 1516.

District No. 13, complete: Cunningham 3310, Hampton (Inc.) 6363, Healy 3722, McElmanahan 266.

District No. 14, complete: Holland 8916, Shieff 894, Thrasher (Inc.) 5758.

District No. 15, complete: Hartney (Inc.) 4064, Moore 6331.

McCormick: So we put forward a very realistic and sound program for care for the children, and for wiping out the discrimination that existed in the school setup--in the school board itself: the nonplacement of minority teachers; and the schools--even at that time there were many that were segregated schools actually. We put forth a very realizable program that, if implemented by any of the people in the coming years, would have solved some of the problems that we still face today in Los Angeles in our schools.

During this same year, I was subpoenaed by the Tenney committee, the Little Dies Committee in California. Tenney supposedly was going to investigate the facts of the un-American groups in California and in Los Angeles particularly. We had issued material. I had a great deal of information given me by some of the people active in the Mexican community as to the Sinarquista movement, which was a Fascist movement, similar to the Hitler youth movement, operating among Spanish-speaking people. All of this material, I understood, had been turned over to the proper authorities, and, of course, Tenney merely saw an opportunity to get himself before the public and to build himself politically by conducting a big, really, anti-labor, anti-Red hearing. He wasn't really interested in subversive organizations in the state at all, or at least had never shown any interest in them. The Ku Klux Klan had operated from time to time and other organizations, and he had never shown any interest in exposing any of these activities.

And actually, when I got before the committee, this was exactly what he went into. He wanted to know who were members of the Communist party that had handled the conferences on getting justice for the Mexican workers, and what political party other people belonged to, most of which I neither knew nor had any interest in. and he oughtn't to have had. I told him so, that he had no right to ask those questions; so this hearing came to nothing.

During this year, the case that was called the Sleepy Lagoon case was being defended by George Shibley, a very able young lawyer from Long Beach, who had put up a valiant fight in the courtroom of Judge [Charles W.] Fricke. Fricke was known in Los Angeles as a prosecutor, and he had from the very beginning used all kinds of methods to cooperate with the prosecution in securing a conviction of these boys. They were found guilty, and at this time George Shibley had to leave for the armed forces. So the committee found it necessary to find an attorney who could handle the appeal. Ben Margolis was finally gotten to handle that.

SUBPENA

Before the
JOINT FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES
IN CALIFORNIA

of the Legislature
of the State of California

The People of the State of California send greetings to:

MRS. LA RUE MC CORMICK,

1408 E. 75th Street,

Los Angeles, California. Phone: JE, 0951.

YOU AND EACH OF YOU, are hereby commanded to appear before
THE JOINT FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES IN
CALIFORNIA of the Legislature of California, created by Assembly
Concurrent Resolution No. 59, 55th (1943) Legislative session, at
Room 1005, in the State Building, Los Angeles,
California, at the hour of 10 o'clock A. M. on Tuesday,
the 22nd day of June, 1943, as witnesses in an
investigation by the said committee, and you are hereby commanded
to bring with you the following now in your possession or under
your control, to-wit:

For failure so to attend you shall be liable to punishment as
prescribed by law and the practice of legislative bodies.

By order of the Chairman of The Joint Fact-Finding Committee
on Un-American Activities in California, this 17th day of
June, 1943.

JACK B. TETLEY.

Chairman

AFFIDAVIT OF SERVICE

State of California }
County of _____ } SS.

, being duly sworn, deposes and
says:

That he served this subpoena of The Joint Fact-Finding Committee
on Un-American Activities in California by showing this original to
each of the persons named herein, and delivering a true copy hereof
to each of said persons, personally, on the _____ day of _____,
1943, in the said County of _____.

Subscribed and sworn to before me
this _____ day of _____,
1943.

Tenney Whitewashed Magazine Article By Time Described

EXPOSED!

Sinarquista Franco Tie Described

ASCIST REBELLION. However, Time magazine, in its January 11 issue, has a very illuminating article on the most recent activities of the Sinarquistas in Mexico, on a recent open rebellion in which the Sinarquistas occupied a town, killed the mayor and several other persons, wounded others. The article is headed, "Mexican Blackshirts." It's rather significant that, though the news was sent out over the facilities of the United Press more than a week ago, no newspaper in Los Angeles, to our knowledge, carried the story.

Following is the story as it appeared in Time magazine: "Out of the Mexican hills rode an armed band. It descended on the sleepy town of Miguel Aza last week and scattered a troop of young Mexican conscripts drilling in the square. The bandits occupied the town for several hours until government troops arrived. The mayor, his son and several others were killed; many were wounded. During the same afternoon bands attacked the towns of Rio Grande and Nieves, in the state of Zacatecas. There was no looting, but many civilians were killed and more were wounded.

ATTUNED TO FRANCO. The Tenney committee questioned some of the local Sinarquistas and learned that they had been informed of the alleged purpose of "investigating" the activities of the Sinarquistas. Mexican leaders of these were people who were members of the American Legion, the Mexican Communist Party, the Mexican People's Party, and other organizations.

The attacks were immediately attributed to the reactionary-Catholic pro-Fascist Union Nacional Sinarquista, which has consistently fought conscription and urged col-

lective punishment. The Sinarquistas, as far as Tenney was concerned, the whole issue of the Mexican community was just another red plot.

COLLABORATION WITH FRANCO. Spain against the U. S. Labor's El Popular called the attacks a "new act of Sinarquista vandalism." Others remembered that less serious attacks last month in Morelos had been carried out under the Sinarquista slogan: "Take Away Your Military Service."

"Prodded by square-jawed Fidel Velazquez, secretary general of the Mexican Workers Confederation, the Chamber of Deputies last month demanded that President Manuel Avila Camacho disband the Sinarquista Union, whose blind discipline was all too reminiscent of the Nazis. Under one Salvador Abascal its membership had grown to at least 200,000, trained men before Abascal lost his job for talking too much. How long, the Chamber of Deputies asked, could Mexican democracy tolerate a well-armed, anti-democratic party which was organized in 1936 as the Anti-Communist Center by Nazi Agent Oscar Hellmuth Schreiter, and from the outset trained semi-militarized shock troops under Spanish Falangists?

Maintained direct contact with the Fichte Bund in Hamburg until the outbreak of the war, the Opposed Pan-American, daubed Hispanidad—an anti-U. S. union of Latin American countries with Spain under the Nazi sounding slogan, "One Race, One Language, One Culture, One Religion."

ATTUNED TO FRANCO. The attacks were immediately attributed to the reactionary-Catholic pro-Fascist Union Nacional Sinarquista, which has consistently fought conscription and urged col-

lective punishment. The Sinarquistas, as far as Tenney was concerned, the whole issue of the Mexican community was just another red plot.

RECEIVED ACTIVE FINANCIAL SUPPORT. From a reactionary wing of the Catholic Church, archiving of the Mexican Revolution. "Was resolved to restore the social order in Mexico destroyed by liberalism, pseudo-democracy and anarchism, to destroy the Revolution?"

"Middle of the road" President Avila Camacho said: "Mexico is a democratic country. All parties are able to exist." Presumably he had granted the Sinarquistas permission to colonize Lower California. He had straddled successfully Mexico's widely separated right and left for two difficult years. His mortal temptations to flight, the Sinarquistas had been to spread leaflets and inspire articles telling the Mexican people that the conscript army would not be sent to fight in foreign wars. "But with armed raids, crackling around his ears, the time was drawing near when President Avila Camacho might have to take action against the Sinarquistas to protect the democracy he led."

This same organization that opposes the war in Mexico to the moment is that Tenney, whose legislative "comité intitulado" lists 11 members in it to whitewashed this fifth column movement just a few weeks ago, is now a state senator and is seeking to set up a similar committee in the state senate.

The Tenney committee in the assembly was a cover for Fascist work. It would be the same in the senate. It is to be hoped that the senate will not permit Tenney to further impede the war effort by his phony expeditions.

McCormick: At the same time, the Communist party had, of course, become the Communist Political Association, and I was a vice-president in that, and I was still active in my own community as well as in the case of the Sleepy Lagoon. I was handling cases from my own home as a representative of the ILD nationally.

My husband's business was not doing well, so in the year of 1944, I went to work in a cabinet shop about a block away from my own home. I had tried to get other work from the time I left the ILD office and found that my name was on a list of "not to hire" because of my pro-labor and radical activities.

##

McCormick: Here I, for the first time, ran into very overt acts of male chauvinism on the part of workers that I had never experienced before. This shop had two AF of L unions in it--one was the cabinetmakers, and the other was the painters. These were all men, with the exception of four people who had been hired recently, including myself, who were women.

The management and the unions had agreed before I came to take in whatever women workers came to work as members of the painters union. The shop steward was a Mexican man, an old-timer in the painters union, and very active in it, and he resented women very much, and made no bones about his feeling that women were not wanted either in the shop or in the union. But since they had to take us into the union because of the agreement with management, they did so. But they made it very plain that this was only a temporary arrangement, and then as soon as they could, they would not have women as members. The other women who were in the shop didn't really want to belong to the union anyway, because they just considered that it was something they had to do. They had to pay dues to it, and they didn't think the union did anything for them. And actually, the union was not doing much for them.

When I went to the first meeting, I saw what the problem was. One of the women had told me she'd gone to one of the meetings and felt so uncomfortable that she'd left. The meeting was held in the downtown area, and as soon as the business was disposed of, which took barely ten or fifteen minutes, the meeting broke up into a social or beer bust for the men. They finally didn't want any women around, and this was their customary handling of union meetings. So I never went to any further union meetings, and I don't think any of the other three women did either.

I was soon transferred to a smaller shop where I was the only person there, so I had little or no contact with the rest of the workers.

McCormick: I was at this time still very active in the party in the Watts area, and continued to also handle the ILD business that I had--local matters--and did attend a number of meetings of the Mexican-American Congress and of the National Negro Congress, in both of which I was a member.

Also, following the demise of the ILD there was the Civil Rights Congress. I met with them and handled some cases and worked with them on a number of issues too. But my main activities were centered around in the southeast part of Los Angeles. During this time, there had begun to be restrictive covenant groups springing up around who were trying to keep out Mexican and black people. I participated in a number of the fights against this. There was the case of Mrs. Laws, who had bought a home up on Ninety-first or Ninety-second Street, and who was actually jailed for occupying the premises of her own property. This was a long, drawn-out case, and we finally won. It was around this case that we established a broad coalition to carry on the defense.

In 1946 also I was part of a committee that set up an election campaign around the candidacy of Joe Terry in the Willowbrook area, and elected the first black person to a school board in the state of California.

In 1947, I again ran for the school board, for the spring elections, and I had fairly wide support--endorsement by a number of unions and by many prominent individuals. I've enclosed a copy of some of the material that'll be attached to this so that you can see what that campaign consisted of.

In 1947 there also took place a riot at the Fremont High School, which was the school that my daughter was currently attending. There had been about three black girls--students in the school--and there had been no particular problems, although my daughter had told me that many of the white students threw things at these girls and never really accepted them as part of the school group. However, a larger group of black students entered in the beginning of the term, and on this occasion a number of the white students had gotten together, and they had rioted and had burned in effigy black students and had cut classes, and there was just general pandemonium. I organized a delegation, through the National Negro Congress and other organizations in the community, and Charlotta Bass of the California Eagle, and we went over to have some discussions with the principal, Mr. Wood.

McCormick:

I'm enclosing clippings on this, because, as usual, the Los Angeles Times tried to make out of this that Communist agitation was responsible. But there was no Communist agitation or any other kind existing in the school. The school authorities simply refused to listen to community people, or to any of the organizations, or to the black people themselves, about measures to be taken to correct this situation. Their final thing was to expel from the school the so-called "ringleaders" of the riot. This only worsened the situation. So we continued for a long time with delegations and with committees and worked with the parents and with as many of the people as we could reach before this situation settled down.

The 1947 elections were pretty hectic and there were many people involved over the city who hadn't been involved in other years. I was running against Mrs. Eleanor Allen, who was the darling of the Los Angeles Times. Everyone had agreed that the Los Angeles Times had backed this woman, who had no particular qualifications at all for the positions she had held, except that her name began with an A, and since at that time they put the names on the ballot alphabetically, the Times was merely assured that there would be a candidate they could work with if they had a candidate whose name began with A. She was, as I said, completely unaware of either the issues in the school district, or any measures that might be undertaken to meet any of the challenges in the school district. So I campaigned against her.

There was also in the field a liberal slate made up of--some of them were schoolteachers and other people who had long been associated with the educational apparatus in Los Angeles. The Times considered these liberals to be as much Communists as they considered myself. Actually, the Times very much feared any black person being a member of the board. Dr. Claude Hudson, long associated with the NAACP activities among the black people in Los Angeles, was a candidate, and a number of these other people who were progressives. The Times was very fearful that there would be a liberal coalition in the school board that might make some changes in the way that our schools were operating--changes that were long overdue. To this day, our Los Angeles schools are suffering from the fact that we were not able to get any traction in the school board on the question of actually integrating Los Angeles schools and many other things that were needed at the time.

The Times was very fearful that someone representing labor's viewpoint might be elected to the board, and that this would completely undermine the great white spot of California, the open-shop town of Los Angeles.

CONFIDENTIAL

RAEULS, Lewis Schwellenbach, a member of the Cabinet of the President of the United States, has asked for an Act of Congress to outlaw the Communist Party in the United States, which has led to the immediate opening of hearings before the House Un-American Activities Committee of fifteen bills, including one by Representative Sheppard of California, backed by revelations of Representative Nixon of California, of positive proof of existence of passport forgery-ring being used by Communists, and

WHEREAS, Secretary of Labor Schwellenbach correctly stated that the bill by Representative Landis of Indiana merely to prevent Communists from holding official places in Trade Unions "does not go far enough" and suggested that the final bill coming out of Committee should be broad enough in its legal outlawing restrictions to answer the following:

1. "Why should we recognize the Communist Party in the United States as a political party?"

2. Why should Communists be eligible to run for office of any kind in the United States when their purpose is to destroy our form of government?

WHEREAS, Dennis, Com. of Communist Party of California in

WHEREAS, the Communist press has announced that Los Angeles is a key City for concentration of political activity of the Communist Party and this is borne out by the candidacy of LaFue McCormick, a Communist Party member running as a Communist

against Eleanor B. Allen, member of the Board of Education, and

WHEREAS, LaFue McCormick's Communist Party candidacy is announced as but a fore-runner of increased open political activity behind actual Communist Party members in addition to the Communist Party backing of non-Communist Party members who will "take" their program, and this in a State where the Communist Party lost its place on the ballot.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council Committee on State, County and Federal Affairs be requested to keep the Council informed of the progress of the hearings of various bills before the Congressional Committee on Un-American Activities so that this legislative body of a City whose government is already a target for invasion by the Communist Party might act officially in support of an Act of Congress to outlaw the Communist Party in the United States as an enemy of the American form of government, seeking overthrow of it by force and violence.

Submitted by:

COGNILIAN ED. J. DAV-IPORT
Chairman: State, County & Federal Affairs
Committee

March 13, 1947

Reaction to Federal and State Legislation Against Communists

McCormick: In the latter part of the forties, '48, '49, '50, I was working with the Civil Rights Congress, which had been organized in Los Angeles and nationally, and was conducting a campaign against the repressive measures that were then being developed in all parts of the country against Communists and for loyalty oaths of employees of the federal government and all other kinds of repressive legislation. I was contacting ministers and other people to interest them in the general campaign.

It was in 1950 that a measure was passed in Los Angeles ordering all Communists to register as subversives. Of course, no one registered, and I was one of three who were arrested under that ordinance. It was subsequently declared unconstitutional, and that was the last of that ordinance.

I added to this a copy of the statement of the local judge, Judge Stanley Moffatt, who was on the bench in the Huntington Park district, which was where I lived at the time I was arrested under this Little Mundt bill. He was a liberal going back to the early days in the early thirties--1931-32, when I first met him. I campaigned for him when I was a member of the Florence Democratic Club and he was running for the judgeship. He had always associated himself with progressive causes. For this reason, after the case in which I was arrested on the Little Mundt bill, the powers that be in the Huntington Park area really ganged up on him. He had also made a couple of liberal decisions in regard to blacks.

In those days, if a black came into the Huntington Park area, he was usually arrested by the police on any kind of a traffic charge or a frivolous charge of any kind that they could place against him. Huntington Park had long been the Ku Klux Klan headquarters, or known as a Ku Klux Klan town, and they even had editorials in their paper to the effect they didn't want outside people coming over, particularly people from the Florence district; they didn't want blacks coming in there. Judge Moffatt had made several decisions which very much irked the powers that be. One of them was on the occasion of a black man who was arrested in a rickety old car, traveling through Huntington Park. Judge Moffatt told the arresting officer that if anyone brought any more of these cases which were just obviously and patently anti-black arrests, someone was going to go to jail, and it wasn't going to be the defendant.

McCormick: This and other decisions and other progressive or liberal decisions that he had rendered through the years, and then capping it off, his remarks at the time of the Little Mundt bill, when I was before him under that--he was so hated by the petty business interests of the Huntington Park area that they decided that they were going to get rid of him. The American Legion and other so-called patriotic organizations carried on a vitriolic campaign against him personally, and in every way, and they actually were able to defeat him. He remained to the last of his days--he died a number of years back--he remained a true civil libertarian, and a true liberal, and a man who steadfastly stood by his principles and beliefs in the face of the cold war, in the face of losing support for his job as the judge, and altogether he was a splendid, old-fashioned, American gentleman, the likes of which we don't see too often.

You asked about what happened in 1951 after the Supreme Court ruling on the jail terms for the Communist party leaders. I continued to work in my own community in the Communist party, holding various positions. I know at one time I was in charge of the press campaign, raising funds and organizing, getting new subscriptions, and in general the campaign to support the press. I held other jobs at various times. One was to help the party in protecting the membership--that is, destroying names, and books, and things of that kind; making it possible for people to function without something that might endanger them.

Party leadership at this time had discussed with a number of cadres the possibility of their leaving their present place of activity in order to protect them for the future in case the drive against the Communist party and against the whole progressive movement became much more serious. So a number of people did leave. I don't know where any of them went. I later discussed this with some of them, but I didn't at that time, no. I was not at this point in the leadership of the Communist party in the county, and I did not know personally what discussions were held or with whom they were held. I did continue on in my own area, as I said. I was approached once by some of the county leadership suggesting that I ought to prepare to go underground. However, I made it clear to them that I did not want to, and did not feel that there was any reason for me to do so. Shortly after that, Adele Young, the very active black woman in leadership in the area, came to see me. She was at that time managing the Hugh Gordon bookshop. She came to see me about this, and we had a very long discussion. Both of us

McCormick: were in complete agreement that we felt that if all of the people who were both active in the party and in the mass organizations and who were known publicly were to disappear from the scene, this would be pretty frightening to the rest of the progressive movement, and we thought it would set back any organizational work and not aid in it, and we both felt that we needed to grow more active, not less so.

So we both decided that we were not going to go, that if we were arrested, if such a thing happened, we would simply stay and fight it. We felt that perhaps we might have a fair chance of carrying on the activities against any sentencing or jailing of people, since both of us were pretty well known throughout the community. So we remained, and, of course, the worst did not happen, and eventually people began to come back who had gone into hiding.

I talked to several of them--people who were well known to me--and those that I talked to--now, they were only a few out of those that did go--felt that it had been a mistake, that there had been an incorrect evaluation of the situation, and they felt that it had done more harm than it had done good. As I say, that was the opinion of just one or two people that I talked with. I personally, at the time, could not see how anyone could, if the drive became such as to take in great numbers of Communist party members--I could not see how anyone could go to another area at this point and really disappear, because of the advanced things that the FBI had to work with--and I knew about some of them.

They were opening letters constantly; they had access to any written forms of communication; quite evidently, our organizations were riddled with FBI agents. We knew that there were a number of them in the Independent Progressive party and the Florence Fair Employment Practices Committee. These agents used to come in. Sometimes we recognized them. We had a way of dealing with some of them. We knew that they were allowed a certain amount of money to participate in these organizations, and so one or two of us would move next to them and continuously urge them to make a donation. I did this several times, and I could see how it nettled them. They never wanted to support anything financially. We knew after a time or two they would not appear again, and then another one would be sent in. So we knew that most of these organizations had these agents, and that they knew who the people were who were participating in them. So I did not really think that any people could disappear for any length of time and be out of the way from the FBI if there actually was a drive to pick people up.

McCormick: The whole situation, really, was a terrible inconvenience to the party membership and dislocated a lot of work that was going on. I can remember that I was very disgruntled about many of the things that happened during that period when there were certain people that were gone. You couldn't discuss things with them--people whose opinions and whose ideas were of real value to us in the community.

In short, I think we underestimated the abilities of the FBI at that time and overestimated our own ability to function under those kinds of circumstances.

You asked my feelings about the Independent Progressive party. I had worked very hard in it, but I did not expect that the Independent Progressive party was going to win any great amount on its first time out. However, I was quite disappointed and very surprised that it did not make a better showing than it did. That only indicated that the American working people in general were still tied to the Democratic party, and although they liked the program of the Independent Progressive party and appreciated the issues that were raised at that time, they were just not quite ready to let loose of what they felt was going to be the winning group, the Democratic party, and go for the third party at that time.

Background of Decision to Leave the Communist Party, 1956-1960

McCormick: The Twentieth Congress of the Communist party in the Soviet Union and the revelations at that congress by [Nikita] Khrushchev [1956] were both a very shocking thing to me and something that caused me to have to reevaluate and rethink all of my experiences from the time I first came into the radical movement. The great numbers of killings, the trials, the whole situation in the Soviet Union had shocked me terribly.

The first thing that struck me, I think, was the fact that all of the problems there within the party, all of the horrible, terrible things that had happened, were blamed on Joseph Stalin. I had no doubt but that all these things were true, because I believed what Khrushchev's report had to say, but I could not understand how one man could do this without the consent of the entire party. I simply could not accept the fact that one individual could completely control an entire apparatus. That was when I began to really do some rereading of the earlier periods of the Communist party of the Soviet Union, and re-thinking about all of the ways that our own party here operated and some of the things that had gone on here.

McCormick: For example, I had become very friendly with Anna Louise Strong, and there were other people too that had not been fairly dealt with in the Communist party. I began to think about all of these things, and out of it I finally came to the conclusion that there was something wrong with the organization itself. Then, of course, I began to think that historically the American Communist party had patterned itself in most ways after the Soviet party. It certainly was contrary to what Lenin wrote, which I reread, that each country has its own historical background, and has to develop its own methods of organization and its own issues and carry on its own struggles. I could remember that from the beginning of my time in the radical movement, that probably necessarily because the Soviet Union was a weak--it was a new baby--that it had to be protected from those enemies without who would have destroyed it and strangled it if they could have. That was the entire capitalist world. Out of this probably grew the activities in the American party in defending the Soviet Union, and it finally came to the point where we were very defensive about the Soviet Union at any time, and really completely uncritical.

Writings by many people who had gone to the Soviet Union had pointed out certain things, but I always shoved them aside because I thought, "Well, they were never in favor of socialism to begin with, and they are simply nitpicking about the Soviet Union and all of the problems that they face," or, "They are actually enemies of socialism, people who would like to see the Soviet Union destroyed, and therefore anything they have to say is simply from their standpoint of an enemy of socialism." Therefore, I paid no attention to what they had to say whatsoever.

We did not tolerate people who dissented very far, as Earl Browder and others who were expelled from the movement. I thought that if we were going to carry on the struggle to win socialism, we necessarily had to have a leadership, a vanguard movement, that was united in their strategy and tactics. So I never doubted but what the Communist party as it was constituted was a correct role for a revolutionary movement.

But the Twentieth Congress and the revelations by Khrushchev certainly pointed up to me that there was something very wrong with our party organization. Meanwhile, we had also had a period of time when there were numbers of people who either dropped out or who were expelled from the movement. I began to feel, as a result of my reading and discussions with other people, that we certainly needed some great changes.

McCormick: My feelings about these things continued on even though I attended club meetings. I was appalled at the attitude of a lot of people towards those who had left the movement and who were seeking answers in other places. They were treated rather shabbily in many instances as individuals. I really felt that it was a time when all of us ought to be looking very carefully into our own ideas and our own thinking and our own past activities and assessing all of our experiences. It certainly led me to feel that it wasn't just a few individuals, or it wasn't a Stalin who had become a dictator and a tyrant and a monster, but it was something wrong with the entire apparatus. As I assessed our movement here in the United States and the experiences that I had had in it, I began to come to the conclusion that we needed a large party here, yes, a Marxist party, but it had to include people who dissented, and who did not go along with some of the policies or some of the thinking, and who had different ideas. I began to feel that dissent was a very important part of any organization or any struggle or any growth.

It finally led me in the late 1950s, 1959 and 1960, to sever my relations with the Communist party. I did this not publicly, but quietly within my own group. In 1961, I believe it was, they sent a member of my club to see me to urge me and to plead with me to come back into the Communist party club in the area. The woman they sent was known to me, or had been for at least a couple of years; she was Elizabeth Williams, who discussed this with me for some time. I told her then that I had no desire to reregister with the Communist party, that I did not feel that it was going to be the vehicle that was going to further struggles toward socialism in our country, and that I was doing other things. Number one, I was going back to school for more formal education, and also was working in the community with various people. I was amazed shortly thereafter to find that this same Elizabeth Williams showed up testifying before the government, before the Subversive Activities Control Board in a hearing regarding Dorothy Healey's Communist party membership registration case.

Evaluation of the FBI and its Files on LaRue McCormick

McCormick: The morality of a government that would send an agent of the FBI to try and recruit someone into an organization that they were investigating or supposedly investigating, that they had declared was subversive, was just too much for me. However, it

McCormick: was in line with the things that they had done over the many years, to my knowledge, ever since I had been in the radical movement, and was also in line with the things that they were doing during the sixties. I have had no reason to change my opinion of the FBI or of the government agencies that supposedly are guarding the interests of this country or the interests of the people of this country since then. As a matter of fact, all of the revelations about the CIA activities in Vietnam and CIA activities all over the world, and FBI matters here at home, only have confirmed my opinion that the FBI is nothing more than the henchman for the invisible government in the United States that has tried always to hamstring any people's organizations to advance towards a better life.

I sent for the file that they had on me. I know in going over the records that they have about me, that they must have spent literally hundreds of thousands of dollars gathering information which was open--public information available anywhere. They could have had copies of the minutes of any of the organizations or any of the activities with which I was involved. There would have been no reason for the expenditure of public money for the purpose of following me around or of reporting where I was from time to time and what I was doing.

I noted with some amusement, at one place where they stated that I had given my family history to the newspapers in connection with some publicity around the first campaign, I believe, that I was involved in, a comment by the agent was that I had admitted--admitted!--that my grandfather was a Republican. This is the sort of strange material that the American public has paid tax money for an FBI to use in just simply harassing and trying to stem any organization that they deemed was possibly something subversive.

The extent to which the FBI has gone to harass and intimidate and to entrap people into all kinds of things on the idea that they were protecting the people from subversive activities--I think the people, if they really knew what this amounted to, would be so indignant that they would never again permit a CIA or an FBI to use public monies to carry on these kinds of activities.

I am further indignant about the fact that they intercepted letters, personal letters to my family, in which they admit in these files that they found nothing that indicated any activities that were of any interest to them. They also intercepted the letters that I was writing Anna Louise Strong,

McCormick: who was in China, and the letters that I received in return from her. These entirely illegal acts--I actually had the basis for a lawsuit, but considering the time and the money that it would take--and I don't have the money to do that--I have not pursued it any further. But it doesn't stop my indignation in any way. I just wonder how much of this sort of thing is continuing even today.

Out of these several hundred pages that I received under the Freedom of Information Act, page after page has been blanked out, which they claim is blanked out for the reason that it's vital to national security. This is absolute nonsense; it's only done to continue further the harassment that I had had from them over all of the years of my activities as a radical.

I have never in my life committed any acts of any kind that were against the interest of my country. And I really had never even known any other individual who did either. This whole question of who is subversive, I think, ought to be obvious to people today when we see the revelations of the activities of the FBI in, for example, the things that they did to Martin Luther King and to other people to damage them in the eyes of their fellow man in order to destroy the progressive organization that these people had achieved.

The reason that I am so indignant about this and making a point of this is because I read today, in 1980, that the Carter administration is considering restoring these organizations to their original cloaks of secrecy and enabling them to use vast sums of public monies to carry on their nefarious activities. It seems to me that this is all part of another drive towards war, and [the reason for] setting up these operations so that they may be able to stop the natural objections of the American people to their own destruction.

Recollections of World War I: The Effects of Childhood Experiences

McCormick: I want to digress for a moment, going back to my early childhood and some of the things that very much colored my life and my activities. And that was that when I was eight or nine years old, World War I was raging. As a child, I was quite a reader, and I read every newspaper that I could lay my hands on, and was both repelled and terrified and yet fascinated by the horror

McCormick: stories, that appeared in every newspaper, of the atrocities which the German army and the Kaiser committed against the women and children of Belgium. I and my little playmates at school--we'd discuss these things. I didn't discuss them with my parents, but we children discussed them. I was, I think along with them, terrified about what a war would do and thought if the Kaiser came over here that all of us would be lost. I was particularly terrorized at the thought of losing my father, who would have been drafted had the war continued any longer. Some of my playmates had already lost their fathers in the war. Within a few doors of our home, there was a large mansion that had been turned into a hospital. Often we children used to go over there and play around among the returned soldiers, the veterans, who were patients there at the hospital. So we got some little idea personally and firsthand about what the war was.

In school, we started the day off, when the bell rang, with an auditorium meeting, where a very energetic and enthusiastic lady principal used to lead us in singing the war songs, "Over There" particularly, the patriotic songs of the day. Then later in the morning we were cutting out of old stockings gun wipers to send for the army. Later again, we were having a drive, every day, to sell Liberty stamps to support the war. So the war was very much a part of our lives, and I say, the whole thing to me was a terror and a horror that I cannot describe.

In addition to this, there was a family that lived just a few blocks from us who were from Czechoslovakia. Since they spoke very poor English, their neighbors, some of them, soon got the idea that these were German people. They wanted to drive them out of the neighborhood. There was talk among them of just physically driving them out. The oldest child was a friend of mine; I attended school with her. I remember that on a Valentines Day she had sent valentines to herself; it was the custom to exchange valentines in the classroom, and she had sent some valentines to herself. The teacher made a great deal of this, and asked her why she did that. Of course, she couldn't answer or had no answer for it. The treatment in general of people from other countries, particularly those that came from middle Europe, was, I believe, very bad. My mother went to see the Plesko family in order to reassure them that she was a friend of theirs and that she would help them in any way that she could. But there was a general feeling in working-class neighborhoods directed, at least here, against German people or those that they supposed were German and might be giving sympathy or aid to the German cause in the war.

McCormick: All of this was frightening to me, and as I say, it made me, from the beginning, a person who hated the whole thought of war. When I went to high school, I had an English professor by the name of Dr. Clewe, who used to take time out from the English lesson and frequently tell us about how terrible war was and that the American people must never again permit their government to involve them in the massacre that was modern war. He was, of course, a Socialist. Before very long, the school board gave him so much trouble, that he and his wife took off for, I believe, Hawaii, where he taught for a number of years. I met him again when I first came into the radical movement, and I was very happy to reestablish the brief encounter that I had had with him in my high school days.

My own son was in World War II and, following that, in the horrible Korean adventure that this country was involved in, and which I was very much opposed to. So war, to me, was still a horror and the ultimate that the ruling class of a country can use against its people.

The Place for Disagreement##

McCormick: You sent me questions regarding my opinion and my feelings about the attitude of the Soviet Union towards, for example, Tito of Yugoslavia. I had fairly early in my experiences in the left wing found that the tactics or the things that were happening in one area were very much different from those in another, even though we were all using Marxism as a tool to evaluate a situation and to work in some realistic way towards a solution of problems. Even so, the differences in, for example, New York and Los Angeles called for entirely different kinds of methods of work. So I was not too surprised to find that nations, too, had these very, very great differences, and that the approach to a problem in one country might be vastly different in another, even though both of them call themselves Marxists and were using Marxist analysis of problems.

So, too, I had friends who were from Yugoslavia and who had told me of the very great problems that the Yugoslavian radical movement faced, due to the fact that Yugoslavia before World War II could almost not be called a nation because of the various factions and almost tribal life that existed in some parts of the country. I wasn't too concerned at all about Stalin's refusal to accept Tito's and the Communists of Yugoslavia's ideas of the road that they should travel to socialism.

McCormick: The same argument has come up over and over. I well recall the long discussions that I had with Anna Louise Strong when she came back to this country after having been deported from the Soviet Union. At that time, she felt that the main reason for her difficulties in the Soviet Union and with Stalin was her acceptance of the Chinese Communists' evaluation of the struggles in China. She told me that she had met with a delegation and that they had at that time--I believe it was Chu Teh who had showed her exactly how they planned to carry on the struggle in China, and had stated to her that within two years, that revolution would be accomplished. When she discussed this with Stalin, he was very angry about it, and from that time forward she had had difficulties, and she felt that this political difference was one of the moving factors in her exile from the Soviet Union.

Any reasonable person knows that from community to community, or county to county, or state to state, and certainly nation to nation, there are vast differences in the background of the people or even in just the political level of understanding of people. So the tactics that one must use, the avenues one must use to get to a certain goal, will be very different from place to place. So I didn't see anything and I don't see anything very unusual about this.

I have been in disagreement with some of the things that are happening in the Soviet Union, although I have no influence there and hardly any here at home with my own government. All I can do as an onlooker is to say, "Well, I don't think they should have done this or that." For example, I disagreed with the Soviet Union going into Czechoslovakia, because here I felt was a nation using their own road to socialism, and I did not feel that the Soviet Union or any other country, no matter what their claim of having had more experience in building socialism--I did not believe they had any right to go in and dictate to another group of people. I also disagree very much with the manner in which the Soviet Union handles the dissidents, those people who are not in agreement with everything that's going on at home; namely, the writers and professional people of one kind or another who are being given a very hard time in the Soviet Union if they disagree with what is going on. Now, I know that the Soviet Union is surrounded still with many enemies, and that there will be attempts and are attempts, I'm sure, all of the time, to place people in positions to do damage to the Soviet Union and to also try to use people within the Soviet Union themselves against socialism. But I think a country as strong, and as big, and as powerful as the

McCormick: Soviet Union has nothing to fear from what people think or with any disagreements that they might have. As a matter of fact, some of those disagreements may be very, very right, for all I know. I really wish that more democracy could be opened up for the people of the Soviet Union, but I have every faith that the people of the Soviet Union will deal with their own government and will gain their ends--will achieve democracy there.

My main concern is to have more influence and to help people here in our own country to make some changes in our country that I feel would be to the best interests of all the people, and to the best interests of our country as a nation. My whole lifetime of experience has been that we have to run in order to stay in one spot as far as maintaining our own civil liberties, as far as achieving the things that we already have outlined in our Constitution. So, from time to time, I may find myself disagreeing with some things that are happening in various parts of the world. But since I am not there, and I can't possibly know all of the factors, I can only have an opinion or view it as an onlooker or as a student who is reading and trying to understand what's happening in our world.

Here in the year of 1980, I'm mainly concerned with how we Americans are going to put a stop to the warmakers who are driving towards another war, and how we are going to turn the use of the vast amounts of national wealth that we have around so that it doesn't go into armaments but can go into making this a decent place to live. We need housing; we need hospitals; we need an overhaul of our educational system; we need a national health program; we need to wipe out unemployment; we need to really tackle the question of equal rights for the minority peoples again; we need so many things, and they are costly things. And then we need to look ahead for the exploration of outer space. We can do all of these things if most of our resources were not going into the war machine.

The Meaning of the Past and a Hope for the Future##

McCormick: As I look back at the years of the 1930s to the sixties, I am impressed by the fact that those struggles that my comrades and I carried on all over the country were really struggles to obtain and maintain the liberties that were already guaranteed us--the American people--by the Constitution. They were campaigns to feed the hungry, to gain equal rights for the

McCormick: blacks and minorities, to obtain and maintain the constitutional rights of free speech and assemblage for everyone. They were struggles to help the unorganized to organize for the common good. We fought for the rights to educate and influence others, and we tried to alarm our fellow Americans to the danger of fascism and war. These struggles were, in the words of Immanuel Kant, "the categorical imperatives" of the times. They were right, they were urgent, they were absolutely necessary, and we were compelled, therefore, to do them.

None of these struggles, with all the blood sweat and tears, changed the nature of the capitalist system one iota, although the enemies of progress declared in their fight against the people's movements and organizations that we were trying to undermine the capitalist system and to overthrow it. Well, the capitalist world indeed grows smaller as the time goes by, and the understanding for the need to replace it with a socialist society is growing greater as our free enterprise system is less and less able to satisfy the basic needs of the people.

The American people are courageous people, and they have a great deal of know-how. I've seen that know-how and courage come together in many struggles where the odds were tremendously against them, and where they have ultimately prevailed. I believe the American people again will find the ways and means to organize to stop the warmakers, and I believe they will organize and struggle to find solutions for the many problems that face them along the road to changing their society to a cooperative one.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to those people who came before me, those people particularly whom I met along the way, who contributed so much to my education and my learning. First of all to the foreign-born workers, the people who had come to this country with the ideals of a socialist society in their hearts, and who, in their adopted country, became the most devoted and the most dedicated to principles of American democracy. And those people who gave so much, and who taught those around them so much, many of whom have already joined the immortals. But I shall never forget them, and I owe them, as I said, a very deep debt of gratitude.

And to the agricultural workers--the Oakies, and the Arkies, and the Mexican workers, and the Filipinos, and the people from India, whom I met in the agricultural fields--I learned a great deal from them, too, and I owe them a debt of gratitude. And to those people with whom I worked closely in the Communist party,

McCormick: and the people in the ILD office, the field secretaries, the people who did the technical work, to all of them who were all dedicated people to the things in which we all believed, which was a better life for everyone--I owe them so much.

I hope that the young people coming on to participate in the tremendous struggles that lie ahead for the American people will learn a little from some of the things that we who went before them learned--from our mistakes as well as from our successes.

I have indeed been fortunate to have been able to participate in the many struggles that were current in my lifetime. And I hope for all the young people to come after that they will share the same joy and the comradeship and the satisfaction that comes from participating in the struggle to make a better world.

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